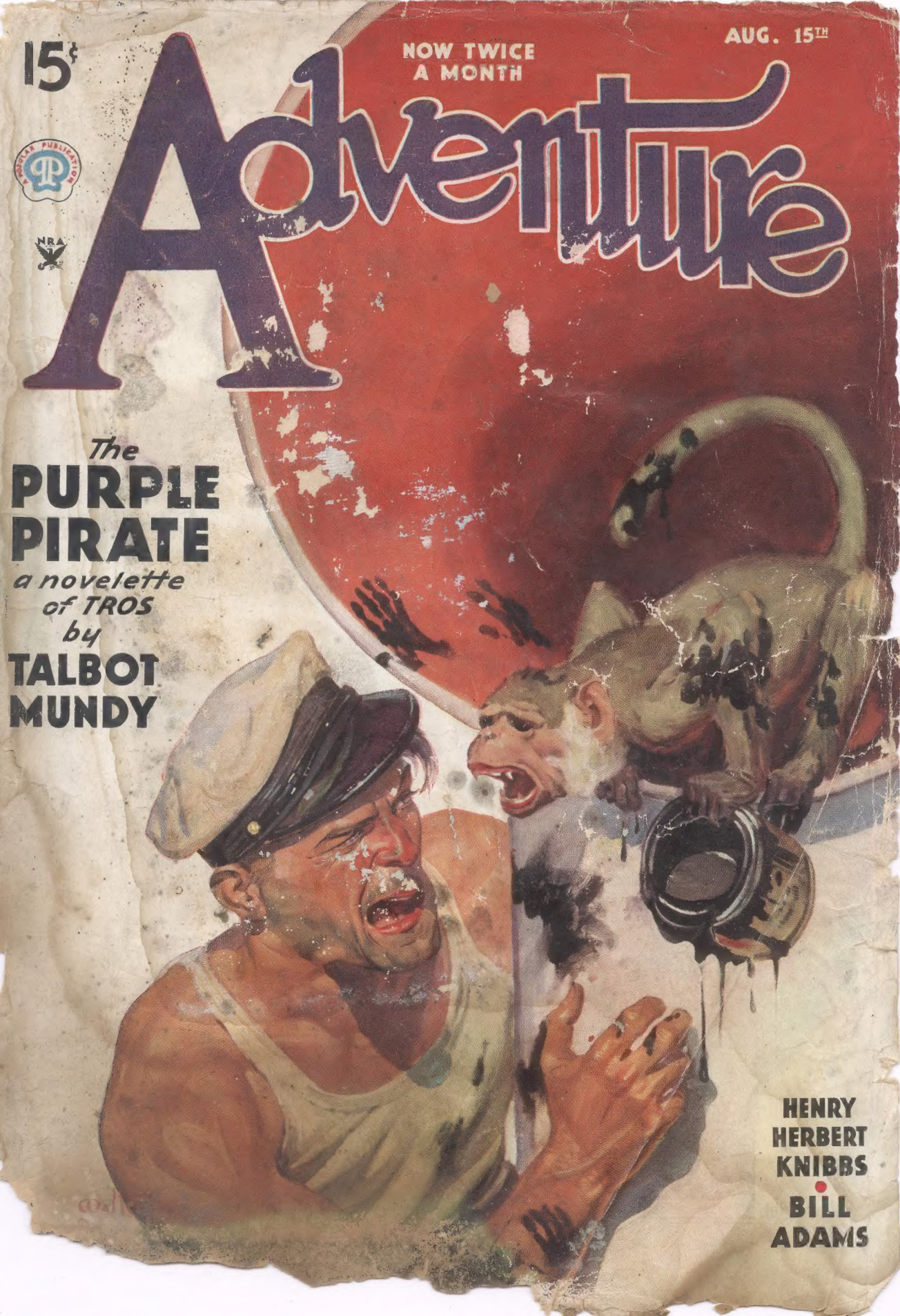
15¢

NOW TWICE A MONTH

AUG. 15TH

Adventure



The PURPLE PIRATE
a novelette of TROS
by
TALBOT MUNDY

HENRY HERBERT KNIBBS

BILL ADAMS

DARING MEN IN DANGEROUS PLACES

The cool eyed explorer, lost on the veldt, facing his mutinous Kaffirs with no other weapon than a white man's courage—that's adventure. The red coated Mountie stepping alone into the Yukon saloon where gold and rum crazed sourdoughs have turned riot into murder—that's adventure. The young Second Mate, with the Skipper and the First down with fever, driving the crew aloft with a marlinespike in the teeth of the storm—that's adventure. The Yankee sergeant leading what's left of the company into hell's corner—that's adventure. Stories of men like these, written by men who know, that's

Twice A Month

Adventure

15c

Don't miss Adventure's popular departments—The Camp-Fire, where readers, writers and adventurers meet to swap stories brought from the far corners of the world, and Ask Adventure, where questions about every part of the earth and everything of interest to the out of doors man are answered free of charge.

Adventure

(Registered U. S. Patent Office)

Vol. 93. No. 2 August 15, 1935 Twice a Month

The Purple Pirate (a novelette) . . TALBOT MUNDY 2

Their battlefield was a sinking ship, and the fight was hopeless. One-eyed Conops leaped to the purple taffrail with the battle trumpet in his fist. "Lay aboard, all hands. Go in fast and gut her. Grapple before their arrows sweep our decks!" And from the quarter-deck Tros staggered to the thunder of crunching hulls and leaped down where the cymbals and the war-roar came. "Grapnels—let go!"

Road Runner . . . . . HENRY HERBERT KNIBBS 55

Stumbling to the ambush on the Dragoon trail, young Hardesty saw the sun glint on the sawed-off Springfield of the Apache Kid. "What I want, I get," said the Kid. And young Hardesty knew it was murder he wanted.

The Feud at Single Shot
(Second of Five Parts) . . . . LUKE SHORT 65

"Pack your guns loose!" roared the mining man. "I'll kill you like a coyote the next time I see you." That night strange thunder rolled from the high peak of Old Cartridge.

Gone Native . . . . . WALT PEACHY 87

Some time toward evening, when the water jugs were broken and the native bullets were getting uncomfortably close to the loopholes in our mahogany hut, we heard a frantic voice from the jungle: "For God's sake, open up! I've come thirty miles on foot to help you."

One Thing at a Time . . . . . BILL ADAMS 100

The rain changed to mist, and the brig with the shifted cargo was lost to sight of the two in the longboat towed at her stern. Her skipper shouted, but his voice was drowned. "Cut!" said young Ross to the skipper's daughter, and the painter parted, leaving them alone on the dark and empty sea.

Cowards Are Bravest . . . . . PERRY ADAMS 106

The colonel dropped his hand. The great gate swung open. Giving his helmet a jaunty tap a captain stepped out among the besiegers—the bloodiest tribe of the hills. The colonel raised his hand. His own brother was next, and already he could see him under the torture knives.

The Camp-Fire . . . . *where readers, writers, and adventurers meet* 117

Ask Adventure . . . . *information you can't get elsewhere* 122

Trail Ahead . . . . . *news of the next issue* 128

Cover by Walter Baumhofer *Illustrations by Neil O'Keeffe, I. B. Hazelton, V. E. Pyles*

Howard V. L. Bloomfield, Editor

Published twice a month by Popular Publications, Inc., 2256 Grove Street, Chicago, Illinois. Editorial and executive offices, 205 East Forty-second Street, New York City. Harry Steeger, President and Secretary. Harold S. Goldsmith, Vice President and Treasurer. Entered as Second Class Matter, August 21, 1934, at the Post Office at Chicago, Illinois, under the Act of March 3, 1879. Yearly subscription $3.00 in advance. Single copy, 15 cents. Foreign postage, $2.00 additional. Trade Mark Registered;

Copyright, 1935, by Popular Publications, Inc.

THE PURPLE PIRATE

CHAPTER I

"ANGRY? AYE, EGYPT, I AM."

IT WAS race day; there was no doubt where to find Cleopatra that afternoon. The races had more effect than law and police on the behavior of the Alexandrine crowd. The priesthood of Serapis might have felt happier, but the crowd would have felt insulted if the queen had stayed away. Unable to compete with such a popular attraction, the priests had contrived to give chariot racing a vaguely religious significance; they had a row of reserved seats, into which they filed with solemn ceremony.

Royalty could not afford to miss the opportunity to arrive rather late and be more brilliantly ostentatious than the priests. True, Cleopatra herself was a priestess; on certain occasions she even wore the robes of divine Isis. But it was better politics to appear at the races as royalty, with the priesthood in decidedly subordinate position.

So Tros, too, attended the races, after his own determined fashion. Too indignant to feel tired, even though he had worked furiously all night long to save Esias' docks and repair yards from destruction, he submitted to be washed and dressed in court apparel. Then he took one last look at the smoking ruin of his trireme, gave curt orders to his lieutenant Ahiram, and had himself carried in a curtained litter borne by eight slaves past the splendid temple of Serapis to the royal entrance of the Stadium.

Like the Baltic wife who was slain by a Roman arrow on the northern coast of Gaul, his beloved trireme, the finest warship the world had ever known, was dead. He couldn't prove it, but he knew the ship had been destroyed by Cleopatra's order, to prevent him from sailing away and leaving her without a man whom she could trust to accept no

A Tros Novelette

By Talbot Mundy

Roman bribes and to engage in no conspiracies against her. He was just superstitious enough to believe that the loss of his ship might signify another new beginning, stormier, more difficult than ever, but a new beginning.

Ever since his childhood on the rocky isle of Samothrace his life had been a series of stormy beginnings: battles by land and sea, far wanderings and baffled efforts to set forth on the great adventure—a voyage around the world. It was his fantastic belief that the world was round and revolved around the sun. It was his whole-souled ambition to set forth on a voyage of discovery to prove it.

MONEY and men he still had. He had gathered his crew, as he had built his ship, faithfully. To build a new ship, queen or no queen, would be easier than it would have been to get another such crew together. He would get that crew to sea again, at all costs, soon, on some sort of ship, to keep them disciplined.

Tros was already storming the future. He looked the part in his gorgeous purple cloak, with the broad gold band binding his raven hair, and his sword in its green-and-vermilion sheath, with the jeweled sword-belt. But he had a greater, more dangerous problem on his hands even than the difficulty of rebuilding and setting forth on his voyage. He had a new woman. He had dared to take to himself, to become the mother of sons should Destiny permit, the queen's own younger sister—the one woman in the world whom Cleopatra feared. He did not yet know quite how much the queen had learned about it through her ubiquitous spies.

The royal entrance to the Stadium was as elaborate as architects could make. Fifty helmeted guardsmen stood like statues on either side of the mosaic

pavement between the parking place for litters and the marble entrance steps. Two junior guard officers, wearing a year's income in gilded armor and jeweled belts and hilts, saluted Tros but flinched from facing him. He looked too angry, too important. They turned him over to the captain of the guard, Leander, a tall, bored exquisite with intelligent gray eyes, who was at pains to appear humorously gracious. He accepted Tros' sword with his own beautifully manicured hands, instead of letting a slave receive it on a cushion. He himself, with his own hands, laid it on a rack in the guardroom.

"Permit me, Tros, to say how pleased I am that your name has been restored to the chamberlain's list. I hope you bear me no ill-will for having had to refuse you admission to the palace recently?"

Tros eyed him, sure, if of nothing else, that what Leander craved was money; not promises or fair words, money. He knew Leander—knew how deeply the man was in debt, how he loved his social position. So he put Leander at once on the defensive.

"I reserve my ill-will for my equals!"

Leander winced. He knew he wasn't Tros' equal by any standard of comparison. Tros, as Leander and every one else connected with the court knew, had refused a throne, more than once. In fair fight no two Leanders could have defeated him with any known weapon. Tros was a man whom men followed because he knew how to lead, whereas Leander was merely a parvenu aristocrat. But Leander was an Alexandrine, and in favor at court. His retort was as prompt as an asp's fangs:

"Equals? Has a purple pirate any equals? I suppose you do feel almost human since they burned your private navy! Have you learned who did it?"

"If you knew what I know, Leander, you would ask fewer questions."

"Omniscience! Was it envious Zeus with his thunderbolts? Did the great god burn your trireme to prevent you from ravaging Olympus?"

"If I suspected you of having done it, Leander, you would be worth more."

"How so?"

"Feet first, on your way to the embalmer. He, at any rate, would have a profit of you. Is it your duty to keep the queen's guests gossiping at the foot of the stairs?"

"Way for the Lord Captain! Kindly tread upon my shadow and immortalize it." Suddenly Leander changed from spiteful raillery to a more familiar, friendlier tone. "Forget your trireme, Tros, and bet on Yellow in the big race; then you'll be feeling better tempered next time we meet. Bet early enough, and you may get odds of five to one, or even better. Red will be favorite, at odds on. Red's owner has been financed by a Roman money-lender, and the Romans have betted their last sesterce. But I think they'll lose their money. Let me do your betting for you."

Was Leander worth buying? Tros decided he might be—possibly. No Alexandrine courtier was very likely to be grateful; but easy money probably would whet his appetite for more, so it might be worth while to pretend to be fooled, with a view to the future. Yellow was probably the one chariot that could not possibly win. Leander would simply keep the money and laugh behind Tros' back. But later he might try another trick and find himself at Tros' mercy.

Tros turned on the lower step and tossed a fat purse to Leander's slave. It contained as much as two years' pay of a captain of the guards. Tros had brought it to give to his friend Olympus, the court astrologer-physician, who would pass it along by undiscoverable channels to the priests of far-off Philae. The way to get true information about India and even more distant countries was to keep on good terms with the priests of the really ancient Mysteries,

whose secret means of information reached to the world's ends. However, Olympus could wait.

"Very well, Leander, place a bet on Yellow and keep half the profit. See that your slave gets the right odds."

He didn't miss the scornful laughter in Leander's eyes as he turned on his way up the marble stairs between the frescoed walls. In the same sort of unexplainable way that he could smell his course through storms and fogs at sea, he had a feeling that he would laugh last, and for the better reason. Meanwhile, he went forward, upstairs, wishing he were going into battle rather than to interview Caesar's young widow, mother of Caesar's infant son, who was all the deadlier because her own brains and ambition were almost all the resources on which she knew she could depend.

The roar from the arena seats—the typical Alexandrine din of men's and women's voices shrilling with excitement—filled the air. The tumult almost drowned the blare of music. From the head of the stairs, at the end of the passage leading to the royal box, there was a view of sunlight tiers of people as gay to the eye as rows on rows of flowers stirring in the breeze.

The apartments above and behind the royal box were like a section of the palace in miniature, as sumptuously furnished. Slaves came running forward from the buffet-table at the end of a long room on the left, to urge Tros to rest and refresh himself. He refused. The buffet-room was full of overdressed courtiers, who stared and made witty remarks behind their hands. Every one knew about the burned trireme. Nobody except Olympus cared to risk Tros' anger by speaking to him about it.

Olympus, in his official black robes and ancient Egyptian headdress, came and smiled wanly, murmuring official nonsense about conjunctions of stars and burning ships. Then he added, for Tros' real information:

"If I read the stars aright, the daughter of Zeus-Ammon"—he meant the queen; it was customary for the rulers of Egypt to claim divine parentage—"is angry and well informed, but in too grave peril to afford what malice prompts. Oh, Tros, you peril-lover! Must you do even your loving perilously? I believe the queen's need of a sword preserves you from her vengeance. But she is a Ptolemy. Beware of her treachery!"

"Thank you, Olympus. I will leave word with Esias to have a purse of money ready for you whenever you call."

Olympus sent a slave to inform the royal chamberlain, who presently came from his seat near the royal box—a splendidly dressed eunuch with secretive, experienced eyes, who was used to being treated deferentially, even by Roman ambassadors. He saw fit to be gracious:

"Take your time, Lord Tros. The queen is in one of her moods, and there is plenty of time before the next race. You have time for a bet. They tell me Red is a certain winner."

"Bet then on Red and be fortunate, but send my name in to the queen. She awaits me."

"Be discreet, Tros. She has had a sleepless night. You will need all your tact."

"I have it. Lead on."

"Too bad that you have lost your trireme. Too bad. Too bad. Come and fortify yourself. A little wine—a little pickled fish-roe, or perhaps a plate of birds' tongues in spiced sauce—"

"Thanks, I am already fortified—with anger. Is the queen in her box?"

"Yes—yawning. It looks well. The crowd mistakes it for royal boredom. Alexandrines like their rulers to appear fatigued with luxury. But the truth is, she listened all night to reports from

spies." He stared with his keen, secretive eyes but he could detect no alarm on Tros' face. "She detests the races, although I daresay she would like them well enough if she might drive her own chariot. But the Alexandrines would never stand for that. They still hold it against her that she once led her own army. She needs a consort—another man of deeds, not words. Do you know—I have always wished it had been you instead of Caesar! An amazing woman, Tros, amazing—incarnate energy. But I warn you, in a deadly temper. She had a royal row with Charmion this morning. Charmion is in tears at the palace."

"Lead on." Tros knew the chamberlain was trying to coax him to indiscretion. He knew, too, that none of the Queen's ministers knew all her secrets, and that there couldn't be a worse mistake than to confide in any of them.

"Lead on, Lord Chamberlain! My errand is urgent."

THE royal box was a roofed pavilion, banked in front with flowers. At the rear there were rows of raised seats, gay with guests—wreathed courtiers and jeweled women. In the midst, in front of the royal insignia—two tall ostrich-feather fans kept in stately motion by slaves who had been deafened and muted for the purpose—was the queen's divan, with room enough for two or three invited intimates; but at the moment there was only one woman seated beside the queen. There was a second's sensation—a change in the note of the tumult, as the Argus-eyed crowd saw Tros approach the divan and bow. Every one knew him by sight, and there was never a dearth of stories of his deeds of valor.

Cleopatra looked tired, and when she was tired she looked tiny—almost like a child, in her plain Greek dress of silk-like linen, with a kingdom's worth of pearls. She was the only woman in white; all the other women in the royal party were as brilliant as peacocks; so she looked distinguished. And, despite the chamberlain's warning, she was as gracious to Tros as he had ever known her. She gave him both her hands to kiss and broke off flowers from her girdle for him to tuck into his belt. Then she suddenly remembered his leg was wounded, and that the wound was received in a battle in her behalf.

"Give him your seat, Hylas."

So the young wife of the wealthiest absentee-landlord in Alexandria had to pretend she liked yielding her place beside the queen to a man who considered her so unimportant that he didn't even trouble to smile when he nodded his thanks. Tros sat, favoring his wounded leg, waiting for the queen to speak first and trying to read what no one ever had read, the intention behind her gaze. When Cleopatra's eyes had that greenish hue she was fair to look at—and as deadly as a netted leopard.

For at least sixty seconds she was silent, vaguely smiling, perhaps letting him remember that he might have risen to share her throne in dead Caesar's place. She was Ptolemy enough to hate him to the death for having declined her offer. But she was statesmanly enough to hide the hatred, if she had it. She was much too wise to wreak unprofitable vengeance on a man as valuable to her as Tros had been and could be. But revenge, directed by a skillful woman, can be made to show a profit. She was ruthless. And now he had dared to love her younger sister—her hated rival. He had changed Arsinoe's name to Hero, had sent her into hiding near Pelusium, and Cleopatra knew it. Tros, wondering how much she knew, felt that she had him by a secret cord that might be harder to cut than a steel bar.

"And the trireme?" she asked, in the friendliest note of a voice that would have made a courtesan's fortune.

"Burned to the keel," he answered. He

saw no sense in telling her that he had saved his arrow-engines, ammunition, small-arms, and most of the ship's gear.

"You look, and you sound, as angry as—as—" she laughed, "there is nothing, is there, with which to compare you! No one can be as angry as Lord Captain Tros of Samothrace! Is it the pain of your wound? Do you scowl at me because some one near Memphis, whom you probably slew for his presumption, shot you with an arrow?"

He saw no use in any flippant answer.

"Angry? Aye, Egypt, I am."

"With poor me?"

"Aye, and why not?"

"Zeus-Ammon shield me! The Lord Tros has come to lecture me again! What on earth shall I do to appease him?"

Tros' big brown fist was resting on his knees. She laid her own little ivory-white hand on it, smiling at the contrast. Tros scowled at her hand, then at her.

"I will tell you, Egypt, what to do. Once and for all I will say it, then never again, for you are too intelligent to need twice or three times telling. Cease from cat-and-mousing with a man who—"

He hesitated. It hurt his pride to have to sing his own praises; that would be too much like an Alexandrine courtier. She prompted him:

"A man who—"

"Who, at the risk of life and fortune, has kept faith with you first and last."

"Yes?"

"Egypt, it was you who bade them burn my ship!"

"I?" She was still smiling, but she removed her hand. "What makes you say it? Tros, unguarded conversation, overheard, has caused too many people recently to pay a call on the executioner. A mere trireme?"

"A man's hope. The fruit of his labors. His means to the end of his heart's desire!"

Her voice changed. "And are the means I use, toward the end that I perceive, to be used for abuse against me? To be thundered at me? Make a song about the truth, Lord Captain! Sing it to me and my ladies! Sing to us the story of the queen my sister, whom you spared on the field of battle and so ingeniously pretended to send home to Cyprus! Who is Hero, who hides near Pelusium?"

Tros' blood ran cold, but the queen only guessed it. He showed her nothing of his thoughts. Not even his eyes changed. Smiling, Cleopatra probed with words that cut like lancets.

"You are not like my Alexandrines, who would desert a woman for a horse-race or a full meal. Now that you have lost your ship, and can't sail away with this mysterious Hero person, how do you propose to preserve her alive? Did you imagine me so ill-informed, or my arm so short and powerless that it can't reach Pelusium? I have a task that I wish you to undertake. Do we understand each other? I am not at the moment Cleopatra, I am Egypt speaking."

Tros was silent. His jaw came very slightly forward, but he gave no other sign of emotion. He hated her, who once had almost loved her. He was astonished that he had never before realized that he hated her. He was too fair-minded not to recognize how desperate she felt, with her throne in hourly peril from a hundred interwoven plots, intrigues, seditions, jealousies and the ravening greed of Rome. Small and gentle-seeming though she was, he knew she would no more hesitate to order her sister murdered, than to order a slave to crush a cockroach. If she really knew where Hero was, there could be only one possible reason why Hero had not been killed. She was to be held, in secret, as a hostage to compel Tros to obey.

His answer was a blunt attempt to force the issue:

"No one need ever know I sent a

substitute Arsinoe to Cyprus. The substitute resembles her well enough."

"No one ever shall know," she retorted. "Let the wench you sent to Cyprus *be* Arsinoe and take the consequences! But you, also, take the consequences."

"For instance?"

"Trust me, you shall soon learn. Our friendship is as dead of your treason against me as some hundreds are dead of the plague that is sweeping the city. Never again speak to me of friendship, but of obedience!"

He sat silent, less displeased than he chose to appear. In the name of friendship there was almost nothing manly he would not attempt, if called on. But if Cleopatra chose to end the friendship, she, too, should face the consequences. He would not betray her. But the end had come of her power, which had been wholly based on friendship, to command his service at his own cost and his own risk.

CHAPTER II

"THE CITY WILL BE IN A BAD TEMPER."

THERE was a sudden fanfare of trumpets. A company of soldiers armed with whips advanced into the arena at the double and drove out the clowns and acrobats, who had been entertaining the spectators in the interval between races. That always put the crowd into a good temper, for the purely Alexandrine reason that it annoyed the rich parvenus who had paid huge prices for the troupes of entertainers. It was great fun to see expensive competitors for popularity interrupted and chased out of sight. The crowed boo-ed the patrons who had paid for the show and roared with laughter at the antics of the fleeing clowns.

Then, perhaps because her sense of strategy dictated a pause in the conversation, Cleopatra appeared to become as interested in the arena as any one else. A slave brought her the gilded wreath of victory, to be tossed down to the winner of the next race. A gate at one end of the stadium opened and four four-horsed chariots came in with a burst of speed that was reined in, after fifty or sixty yards, to a spectacular canter. Passing beneath the royal box the charioteers saluted. Then, before reaching the turn at the western end, they wheeled and came back slowly to the starting post, which was a gilded pole exactly opposite the royal divan. The tumult of the excited crowd was like the roar of battle on a storm-bound beach.

This was the big race of the year. Fortunes depended on it. In Alexandrine estimation it was more important than war and politics. Unlike the crowd in Rome, they didn't care for scenes of carnage on the strewn sand, although dangerous driving excited them almost to madness. Where a Roman amphitheatre would have had trapdoors for admitting wild beasts, the Alexandrines had wooden gates in a marble wall for the swift removal of injured men and horses. Death was best out of sight, out of mind. They loved life swift and noisy. They loved fortunate people. The owner of the winning team, for a year to come, would be the most envied man in Alexandria. As likely as not, the losing owners would be almost bankrupt and might have to retire to their country estates, or even to flee the country to avoid creditors. Many a losing owner had been sold into slavery.

The crowd's tremendous roar was punctuated by the sharp yelps of the layers of last-minute odds in the betting booths beneath the tiers of seats. Streams of slaves were scampering along the corridors to make bets for their owners. The bookmakers were laying odds of three to one on Red, even money on White, three to one against Green and ten to one against Yellow. All the royal party seemed to favor Red; they

were grumbling at having to accept odds of one to three. Cleopatra glanced at Tros:

"Are you not betting? You, who take such chances! Or is your new woman already risk enough?"

He made a wry face. "Yellow!"

She looked at him intently. "Strange, how wise you sometimes are in little matters, and how foolish in great ones! You will win your bet."

He wondered what she might mean by that. Then he recalled the laughter in Leander's eyes.

"If I win, I shall not get paid," he answered.

"Why not?"

"I gave my money to the captain of your guard, Leander. He advised me to bet on Yellow. He will either have betted on Red or else have simply pocketed the money."

"Why did you entrust your money to him?"

"Because I knew he is badly in debt. I thought to buy his good-will. But if Yellow should win, he will be ashamed to face me. I shall have made an enemy instead of a friend. But no matter. He won't last long. I imagine, if you don't pay his debts, his creditors will make the city too hot to hold him."

"He is not worth it," she answered. But Tros knew she rather liked Leander, and he judged from her effort to appear uninterested, that he had lodged a thought in her mind. She was staring at the Romans, who had a whole block of seats, over on the left beyond the seats of the priests of Serapis and the block reserved for the city officials. They were nearly all of equestrian rank; their togas made of a solid splurge of color.

IT was a huge stadium, with an elongated oval wall, about four feet high, on the inside of the course, so that the narrowest parts of the course were at the starting and finishing post directly beneath the royal box, and at the corresponding curve on the far side. There was barely room to get the plunging stallions in line for the start; it was an accepted principle, hugely enjoyed by the crowd, to injure one's opponent's team if it could be done without risk to one's own. So there was some marvelous manoeuvring—twenty or thirty false starts and at least as many hairbreadth escapes from disaster.

The charioteers even used their long whips on each other, and it seemed that Red got the worst of those exchanges. Red was drawn on the inside. The other charioteers seemed to be trying to make him smash his wheels against the low wall. Their efforts excited the crowd to spasms of frenzy that brought a curious smile to Cleopatra's rather sensuous, arrogant lips.

Yellow came in for almost none of the rough jockeying. Drawn on the outside, the charioteer was able to keep his stallions from becoming as frantic as the others. They were sweating less. But, on the other hand, they looked less spirited, and he less competent; he appeared to have none of the brilliant audacity that the Alexandrine crowd adored. The odds against him went to twelve to one before the drop of the starter's signal.

They were off at last, amid a tumult that echoed from the high marble walls of the stadium and made the blue sky seem to be a roof of solid noise. Tros almost missed seeing the start, because some one leaned over between the fans and whispered to the queen; she appeared not to notice the whisper, but her left hand tightened on a scrap of parchment. Surreptitiously she read the parchment, and then crumpled it, keeping it clenched.

Yellow tailed off at the start, three lengths in the rear, and made no effort to steal the lead at the first turn. Red was leading, with Green and White neck-

and-neck behind him. The crowd, for the moment, grew almost quiet until, beneath the royal box again at the end of the first round, White drew even with Red. The real battle began and the spectators lost their reason—lost all consciousness of anything but mad excitement. Excepting the queen and Tros, the royal party went as mad as the rest of them. Tros was watching the queen with the side of his eye. She was watching the Romans.

There was something ominous about the Romans. Their cheering was arrogant, organized, almost battle-angry, triumphant when Red regained the lead but changing its tone as the tactics of the other charioteers grew more evident. They were forcing the speed at the turns. The speed caused Red to swing wide, so that Green could cut in and steal the inside position. White fell into third place. At the next turn Green deliberately reined wide, forcing Red to sheer off, and leaving room for White to spurt up again on the inside. The Romans rose in their seats and had to be shouted down by the armed attendants; two or three Romans resisted and were thrown out. The Alexandrine stadium was better policed than the city streets.

"After the race," said Cleapatra, "you will find those Romans reasonable."

Tros laughed. "The only reasonable Roman is he who has won. You know their motto, don't you? *Parcere subjectis, sed debellare superbos!*"*

She spoke rapidly, as excited as he had ever seen her. She seemed to have forgotten her threat of enmity. Perhaps it was force of habit. Even in Caesar's day she had trusted Tros with her dangerous secrets; since Caesar's death she had talked more unreservedly to him than to any one else.

"This was the Roman's bid for popularity. Every one knows they have bribed the others to let Red win. Even I knew it! All the city has bet on Red."

"And you?"

"It was expensive. But mine is the deeper purse, and I am not so stupid as a Roman woman! The city will be in a bad temper. Now watch Yellow."

The spectators were already in a vicious temper, screaming, cursing, calling on a hundred gods, beating one another's heads and being beaten to their seats by attendants armed with batons for the purpose. Nothing but a miracle could save Red. Green and White were worrying like wolves at a stag, first one and then the other cutting in at the turns and forcing Red toward the outer wall. Yellow, three lengths in the rear, was using no whip; his stallions were going well within their strength, and he had lost his look of incompetence. He was awake and alert, his team in control; he seemed to know what was going to happen.

Red had the faster team, but they were worried and frightened by their opponent's tactics. He used his whip on the other charioteers and on their horses, but he could never get far enough ahead at the turns to prevent one of them from cutting in on the inside while the other crowded him outward. Six times around the course they fought it out amid a tumult, in which color, noise and motion were all mingled in a sunlit roar of agonied suspense. And then the end came, just before the finish of the sixth circuit within fifty feet of the royal box, with one more round to go.

AT the last turn Red had gained a slight lead, but his bullied stallions were tiring. White, on the inside, called on his team for a last spurt—the last ounce that was in them. Flailing with his whip,

*"Spare the conquered, but lick hell out of the proud!"

he drew abreast and forced Red almost to the outer wall, letting Green through on the inside. That was the end of White; his exhausted horses faded and fell away into last place. Yellow, third now, began to drive like a winner—like Phoebus-Apollo pursuing defeated night behind the horses of the sun.

Green, on the inside, with a team that was nearly done for, made a furious bid for the lead. Red accepted the challenge. For fifty thundering strides they were neck-and-neck. Then Yellow challenged —drew even, on the inside. Within fifty yards of the royal box, twelve whip-mad stallions strained in a line that wavered like spring steel. Suddenly Green swerved. He crashed Red. There was a yell like the agonized death-cry of a nation. Green and Red went down in a dusty thunder-thump of broken-legged horses, splintered poles, smashed wheels, chariots and men. Yellow went on alone to win the race, with White following at hardly more than a trot.

The stadium slaves were on the job in a second. Before Yellow had made the last circuit at full gallop they were out with their mules and ox-hide sleds and had dragged the wreck out of sight, through a door in the wall beneath the royal box. The queen stood up, on a footstool, to lean over the bank of flowers and toss the gilded wreath to the winner. She looked delighted.

But the Romans, over on the left, were dour. The attendants were frightened, forming squads with their backs to the wall behind the topmost tiers of seats. The cheated crowd became a mob as suddenly as if a wind had smitten them and whipped them into fury. They poured into the arena, with the ominous riot-snarl that sounds more terrible than war, and began pelting the Romans with scraps of metal wrenched from the decorative emblems, marble fingers of statues—anything that could be broken off and used as a missile before the soldiers could interfere. And the soldiers were strangely dilatory, although some of the queen's guard, commanded by Leander in person, filed into the royal box and formed a crimson-cloaked screen on three sides.

The queen took Tros' arm, looking tiny beside him. Tros caught Leander's eye and smiled. Leander's grim and stony look was hardly likely to be due to the riot. He was surely not afraid for the queen. The crowd was unarmed. There were plenty of royal guards. Riots were of such common occurrence in Alexandria that the authorities looked on them as all in the day's work. The royal box and its apartments were as safe as a fortress; being built of marble, they were even fireproof. No, there was something else the matter with Leander. He avoided Tros' eyes. And when the queen looked up in his direction he deliberately looked away, pretending to be keeping an eye on his men.

The queen spoke, but she had to repeat it, because Tros was turning over in his mind the problem of what use he might make of Leander, who now owed him a sum of money that he never possibly could pay.

"Tros, I asked you to pick up that scrap of parchment."

He stooped for it.

"Keep it," she said. "Come with me and read it."

Olympus, standing in the corridor like a wan ghost in a black shroud, made a sign with his tau-handled staff—a bit unnecessary, Tros thought. He was already on guard with every nerve in his being. Gloomy old Olympus was a bit too fond of that air of mysterious, all-observing wisdom. However, there was one thing about Olympus: he never claimed personal fees for his friendly efforts to act like the finger of Fate. It was sufficient for Olympus that one made gifts to the priests of far-off Philae.

CHAPTER III

"Go and Kill Cassius!"

THERE were three ambassadors in the buffet room. All three were unofficial, at cross purposes, but as diplomatically cordial to one another as they were eager to be first to obtain a private audience. Since Caesar had set the precedent, Cleopatra very often used the stadium as a means of holding secret, strictly unofficial conversations that she preferred not to trust to her ministers' ears. Those unofficial ambassadors were wary of the wine that was being pressed on them by the chamberlain and his staff of beautifully mannered courtiers. Cleopatra's wine had a curious reputation for loosening secretive tongues, though some said it was the queen's own witchery that did the damage.

One ambassador was a Syrian in Roman military uniform. One was a solemn-eyed Gaul, in trousers, with Marc Antony's name continually on his lips. The third was Herod's man, as sly-eyed and handsome as Herod himself, dressed as an Idumaean but looking more like an Armenian. They moved to attract the queen's attention, but the chamberlain manoeuvred his crew of exquisites so as to make it easy for her not to notice them. She preceded Tros into a frescoed room floored with onyx and severely furnished. It had a window opening into a small courtyard with three blind walls and a view of the sky. Two deaf-mute fan-bearers followed; they could read nothing, write nothing, hear nothing, say nothing, do nothing except stand, and sway their jeweled fans, and see, and smile, and symbolize Egyptian thralldom to a Greek throne.

"Now," said Cleopatra, "read it."

She and Tros stood at the window, where she could watch his face and he could see the fine handwriting on the parchment. It was one of those slips on which the queen received so many secret messages. It was sealed, but the signature was almost illegible, as if the writer had deliberately disguised it, from fear or some other motive.

> In obedience to commands received by royal messenger, this commander of the royal fortress at Pelusium has this day arrested and imprisoned, secretly as directed, a certain woman calling herself Hero, representing herself to be the wife of a merchant of Memphis but wearing beneath her chiton a silken girdle with a golden buckle that undoubtedly did formerly belong to Tros of Samothrace. The bearer of this message has the girdle, and also the painted portrait of the woman, which was sent for identification and has been found to resemble her nearly enough, though she is some years older than the portrait suggests and the color and manner of wearing the hair seem different. This may be due to the painter's desire to flatter, and to the portrait having been made several years ago. In obedience to the royal command the prisoner was searched, but has not yet been questioned under torture, with the consequence that she has said nothing of any importance. Her mood is sulky and her manner toward her custodians insolent, in spite of good treatment. An accounting of the money found in her possession, and of her personal belongings, is on a separate sheet, properly attested.

Cleopatra held out a girdle for Tros to examine. It was of new silk and he had never seen that before, but the buckle was a beautiful piece of craftsmanship that had been given to him by Fflur, the wife of Caswallon, the king of a corner of Britain.

"Do you recognize that buckle?"

He was silent, remembering Fflur's Celtic second-sightedness and how she had told him he would one day give that buckle to his woman. It angered him to see it in Cleopatra's hands.

Few rulers on a tottering throne, surrounded by treachery, amid a populace accustomed to violence, would have dared to laugh at Tros as Cleopatra did then. There were only the unarmed deaf-mutes to protect her. Tros could have pitched them, with hardly an effort, through the window that was letting in

the roar of riot. True, there were guards outside the door, but he could have killed her before they could have burst in to interfere. The reddening fury in his eyes would have made a coward scream for help. Cleopatra laughed gayly and tossed him the buckle.

"Keep it—for a reminder of my mercy! In all your travels, impudent Lord Captain, have you known another queen who could forgive such treason as yours? Were you in such need of a woman? You, whose chastity has been a byword! You could have had your choice of any woman at my court. Were she already married, I would have had her divorced to please you.

"But my sister! My bitterest rival! And instead of slaying the traitor Alexis, you have had the monstrous impudence to send him and that Etruscan rat Tarquinius to put one of my father's bastards on the throne of Cyprus in Arsinoe's place! You purple pirate! Before your first kiss from Arsinoe's lips was dry, Tarquinius had written to me! Did you think Alexis, who betrayed me, would not betray you in turn? He, too, has written. Too merciful, too credulous, too amorous Lord Captain Tros!"

SHE paused, between mockery and viperish anger. He stood silent, weighing the buckle as if in a scale against impulse. She continued:

"And so Arsinoe, for whom the throne of Cyprus wasn't good enough, has changed her name to Hero, has she, to become the paramour of the very pirate whom I sent to make an end of her! And Boidion, the bastard, has become Arsinoe and is Queen of Cyprus! Your Hero, is she so much lovelier than I, that you propose to share my throne with her? Is that it? What did you propose to do with *me*, Lord Captain?"

He did what he knew she hated him to do—folded his arms and paced the floor. Suddenly he turned on her:

"Egypt, let well alone! Hero—"

"Truly!" she interrupted. "You will say she is no longer my dangerous enemy! She shall be even less dangerous! Pausanias, who commands at Pelusium, is a little too much an admirer of you, Lord Captain. I will send another to replace him, who is less likely to love you and do your bidding."

She sat down in an ebony chair, as dignified as the painting of Penelope rejecting suitors, on the frescoed wall. Tros strode toward her, towering above her:

"Egypt, neither she nor I would have your throne as a gift. No, nor though you have burned my trireme, which was a cruel and faithless act, would I lift a hand against you. For I know your difficulties, and I pity your fear to trust man or woman. But—"

He hesitated. She was looking haggard. Her youth was gone. The underlying Ptolemaic savagery had overwhelmed her real genius. She was in a mood, at that moment, to summon the guard, and wreak vengeance.

"Yes?" she prompted. "What?"

He dared her:

"Harm you one hair of her of whom we speak, and count me from that hour your enemy forever."

Instead of summoning the guard she sneered:

"It is easier to deal with enemies than false friends!"

He knew the danger was gone for the moment. Sneer and threat were evidence enough that she had in mind something else than silly vengeance. He laughed. "Aye, you have your executioners. They can lop off loyal heads as easily as any. But they would have done their work on me already, unless your need of me were greater than your malice."

"Malice?" She glared.

"Aye, malice! Jealousy! Unqueenly, mean ingratitude!"

"Have a care, Tros!"

"Too little care I have had! I have saved you, at my own cost and my own

risk, how many times since the day when I snatched you, exiled and defeated, from a beach and brought you—a chit of a naked girl—to match your wits with Caesar's! Have I ever accepted a price, or a gift in return for the blows I have struck to save you on your throne? Have I ever grudged my loyalty, that you should cat-and-mouse me as you do your generals and ministers, who would sell you to the highest bidder if they dared? When have I sold you? When have I taken a bribe to betray you?"

"A man who can change my sister's name and substitute a bastard on the throne of Cyprus, could change his own coat!" she retorted. "I can't trust you not to sail away, and leave me like Dido weeping for Aeneas. No reward can hold a man like you. I even offered you a throne—my own throne! You refused that. Now you wench it with the sister who once stole my throne, who even drove me out of Egypt—who hates me with envenomed pride because I spared her, and begged her life after Caesar's triumph—who wasn't satisfied with Cyprus, but invaded Egypt to—"

Tros interrupted: "It was Boidion who invaded Egypt, and you know it! Arsinoe was betrayed into slavery by your rat Tarquinius, and escaped, and came to Egypt to prevent—"

"I know Arsinoe! She came looking for you, to inflame you—maddened you with kisses on a field of battle! Hero is her new name, is it? I will send Leander to command Pelusium! There shall be a fine new tale of Hero and Leander, if the Lord Captain Tros should disoblige me in a business that needs urgent doing!"

That threat stirred Tros almost beyond self-control.

"Shall I bargain with a queen who burned my trireme to escape from keeping a promise?"

"No. For I will not bargain with a man who takes into his bed my rival, whom I sent him secretly to kill!"

"So then what?"

"You will obey, Lord Captain."

THAT suited Tros perfectly. He recovered his self-control. But he dissembled it beneath a scowl that would have frightened any ordinary woman. Pride in his own integrity would have compelled him to keep a bargain. There was no man or woman on earth who could make him obey. Agreement and good faith, yes. Obedience, no; that was something that he demanded of the free men whose captain he was. He was not Cleopatra's subject. He had never accepted her commission.

Cleopatra misunderstood his scowl. She mistook it for irresolution. "Should you disobey, your Hero will endure the fate of my elder sister Berenice, who usurped my father's throne for a while in the days when you were pirating in Gaul, Lord Captain. You may have heard how Berenice died? Not comfortably. And your friend Esias, who I know is your banker, and who sold me your pearls for a price that would build a fleet of triremes, shall hand over your fortune to my treasurer."

Tros did his best to look scared. But he knew she would never dare to antagonize the Jews too much. The Jewish bankers were capable of making government impossible in defense of their right to protect their clients' interests. They were good bankers, and bad subjects, easy to scare into secret opposition or open rebellion, and extremely difficult to rob by any other means than force of arms. And if she should secretly murder her prisoner, then her hold over Tros would be gone. Thinking of that, he breathed more freely, though he knew he would need his utmost guile and perhaps, too, his most reckless audacity, to set Hero free. The queen would never release her, no matter what she might promise.

"This must be a desperate business," he suggested.

She nodded. "Cassius is nearly ready to invade. Marc Antony can send me no help, though he warns me that Cassius is intriguing with Herod to seize my throne. Herod is to have his choice of my sister or me. I dread Herod's brains more than Cassius' legions. How many men have you? I know you sent more than a hundred down the Pelusiac arm of the Nile, including your brawling Northmen, whom you had the impudence to release from a prison camp without my order. I know those are now billeted among the villages near Pelusium. How many men have you here in the city?"

It was no use lying. She probably knew, and, if she didn't, she could find it out in an hour.

"Two hundred and forty and some odd, counting officers," he answered.

"Can you arm them?"

"Yes. Their arms were ashore when the ship burned."

"You have then about three hundred and fifty men, well armed and fit for battle?"

"If you would let me have my Basques, whom your lately demoted governor of the city sentenced to enlistment in the Red Sea Coast Patrol, I should have five hundred men."

She pondered that a moment. She knew how loyal he was to his men. Those Basques were one more hold she had on him.

"Even you admitted they were lucky not to be more severely dealt with," she answered. "Theft, murder—those are capital offenses. And they are too far away. It would take too long to summon them. Cassius has demanded that I send to him all the Romans in Alexandria who are fit for military service: the two legions that Caesar left here, the old Gabinian irregulars and every Roman citizen of military age. It is a trick—an excuse for invading Egypt. Cassius thinks I can't do it. He thinks the Romans will refuse to leave; they would rather wait for him here, and be first at the loot. Cassius would then say it was I who refused to send them."

SHE paused. She appeared to be listening to the din through the open window, but she was studying Tros, evidently weighing in her mind how much or how little to tell him. The din in the stadium had perceptibly lessened when she picked up the thread of her monologue:

"That is the meaning of this riot. Now perhaps you understand why I have spent so much money to make the Alexandrines believe the Romans have swindled them over a chariot-race. There is no easier way than that to enrage them and make them murderous. I have more than a thousand agents in the city spreading the rumor that the Romans all betted on Yellow. By tonight the Romans will be glad enough to go to Cassius, and the ships are ready for them.

"They are not good ships. There will be a North wind, will there not, at this time of year? They will not reach Syria. You understand me? Cassius' excuse will be gone. Nevertheless, he will think of another, unless I give him something else to think about. Cassius needs money. Having murdered Caesar, he hates me for being the mother of Caesar's son, who he knows I intend shall inherit Caesar's conquests. Cassius knows my army is in no condition to oppose his seven legions. And he knows that unless he moves swiftly Antony may come to my aid. Far more than I trust Antony, Cassius fears him."

Tros laughed gruffly. "At the lowest estimate Cassius has twelve or fourteen thousand men! Do you expect me, with three hundred and fifty, to go and defeat them?"

"I would not send even you to try to

do that," she answered. "Listen to me. My spies have reported that Cassius has mobilized five legions at Jericho. Egypt is his only possible objective. But I don't dare to mobilize. Some of my regiments are mutinous; others are only half-trained. Several of my generals are disloyal, and some are incapable. If I should mobilize an army to defend the frontier, Cassius would call that an act of war. He would march. My army would surrender to him."

"You have at least three loyal generals and some good troops," Tros objected.

"But I need my loyal troops to guard the Red Sea coast against Arabs, and the southern and western frontiers against Ethiopians, and Nubians, and Senussi, who would plunder Egypt if they saw a moment's chance. Besides, I tell you, I don't care to be openly Cassius' enemy. Rome hates him. Even Brutus, his ally and co-murderer, loathes him. Antony and Octavian intend to rid the earth of him. But Rome would never tolerate my taking up arms against a Roman proconsul. Though the Romans hate him worse than they hate me, they would call it an insult to the Roman people. They would avenge the insult. Such an excuse as that might even end their civil war. They might make common cause against me. So, you understand, I must employ a man whom I can disown, who is not my subject, who has never held my commission, but who has a motive of his own for hating Cassius."

Tros put his hands behind his back and kept silence. He could have told her how little he cared whether Cassius lived or died. He had nothing but contempt for the man, and he hadn't the least intention any longer of risking life and fortune for Cleopatra's sake. But if Hero was in Pelusium, a prisoner, and if Cassius should invade, and seize Pelusium, and learn who Hero really was, the situation would be just that much worse. He looked sourly incredulous, in order to tempt the queen to tell him more than she might do otherwise.

"Caesar was your friend," Cleopatra continued. "You were in Rome, and you yourself saw Cassius kill Caesar. It was you who came and told me. So you have a motive for hating Cassius. And you are a pirate, even though you say you are not. You were denounced as a pirate by the Roman Senate, and by my minister of state in response to Roman protests. I have caused your trireme to be burned because Cassius demanded it, as punishment for your having sunk two Roman biremes. And you are the only man I know who has a little private army of dependable men who would follow you to the death, no matter where you led them."

"What is the errand?" he asked her at last.

"Go and kill Cassius!"

HE stared in astonished silence.

"You may have your Hero, and go whither you will, in exchange for the head of Gaius Cassius Longinus, Roman proconsul of Syria. Failing his head, I will show you her head, on the end of the torturer's pike! Do we understand each other?"

He turned his back on her and paced the floor. She mistook the strangle-grip of his hands behind his back, the tension of his forearms and the way he averted his eyes when he turned, for signals of defeat. But the truth was, he wished her not to see the battle-anger in his eyes. He knew it was there; he could not possibly suppress it, not for a minute or two. Had he answered her then, he could not have controlled his voice. At the moment he had only one thought, and he had to dismiss that before he could think reasonably and speak calmly. Could he, he was wondering, seize Pelusium with three hundred and fifty men? There were probably not less than

three thousand men under arms in Pelusium! He must drown that thought, and think of something practical.

"Stand still, Tros! You irritate me when you pace up and down. Remember: bring me the head of Cassius, or proof of his death, and you shall have your Hero, to go whither you will. I will help you to build a new ship."

He laughed. The laugh meant that he would never again trust her, not though she should swear on the secret scrolls of the Hierophants of Philae. But she thought it meant he yielded, and he had his eyes in control at last. His cunning obeyed him; he discovered words to flatter her self-confidence and yet not make a promise such as self-respect might forbid him to break.

"When do you wish me to go?"

"Now—swiftly and in silence—just as soon as you can get your men together and equip them. I will send a secret order to permit you to take from the government arsenal whatever you need and can't get from Esias."

"If I return with the head of Cassius," he answered, "I will hold you to the last word of your promise." But he said that to deceive her. He knew she had no more intention of letting Hero go free than he himself had of running a murderer's errand.

"I shall send word to Pelusium," she said, "to have your Hero killed if you attempt a rescue. You will go by land, because I wish to be sure of your movements, and because I understand that Cassius has a fleet in the harbor of Gaza that could easily catch you at sea. Yours is to be a land-foray, and the price of failure will be the death of the fool who threw her throne away for your sake! Fortune favor you, Lord Captain. No need to inform me of your plans; I shall receive reports of all your doings. On your way out, kindly tell my chamberlain to bring in the Gaul."

HE backed out, bowing low to hide his facial expression. By the time the door had closed behind him he was smiling, and none could have guessed his thoughts—unless Olympus did. Olympus watched him, and he wondered how much, or how little Olympus actually knew of Cleopatra's secrets. Certainly Olympus knew enough to make Charmion jealous. And how much did Charmion know? Charmion's quarrels with the queen were usually due to the fact that Charmion was the more or less secret director of the queen's spies and the queen's secret police. How much did Olympus know of Charmion's envenomed hatred and suspicion of one who had dared to reject her queen's offer of marriage? Tros couldn't guess, and he didn't dare to be seen talking to Olympus—not then.

The riot had been quelled in the arena. Many of the seats were empty, but the racing had resumed. For the time being the remaining spectators were in a state of harmless ecstasy. Tros found Leander at the foot of the stairs, and Leander returned him his sword.

"See here, Tros—"

"Hold your tongue, Leander, lest you say the wrong word! I know well what you did. And now you owe what all your boon companions would call a debt of honor. Can you pay it?" Tros had a sudden inspiration. "Grateful for your tip, and not yet realizing you had tricked me, I spoke to the queen about you. Should she promote you to the command of Pelusium, you may thank me for it. If so, then remember who befriended you instead of compassing your ruin."

Their eyes met. They exchanged salutes. There was no knowing what such a man as Leander would do, or not do. If the queen should send him to command Pelusium, he might try to repay his debt to Tros by being complaisant. He might let the secret prisoner escape.

Or he might try to wipe out the personal debt, and to strengthen himself in the queen's favor, by setting such a trap as should eliminate Tros forever.

It was even possible that was Cleopatra's real intention. Rather than be criticized for handing over to the executioners a man who had befriended her through thick and thin, perhaps she preferred sending him on a foray that would give her a perfectly good public excuse for ordering her troops to block his way and kill him and all his men, somewhere between the city and the border.

Leander was probably treacherous. But it would be safer to trust Leander than the queen. Cleopatra had forfeited the confidence of Tros of Samothrace, irrevocably and forever.

CHAPTER IV

"What Matter a Burned Trireme—?"

TWO Romans invited themselves into Tros' litter. They were lean men, but the added burden made the Negro bearers show the whites of their eyes; Tros and the sumptuous litter were weight enough for eight slaves, already terrified by the rioting which had spread to the streets. All the Romans had fled from their seats in the stadium. Some of the enraged spectators had pursued them and were hunting them high and low, assisted by a mob that neither knew nor cared why. Even with the curtains drawn there was a chance that the two equestrians might be spotted and dragged out to be beaten to death.

"A bad business," said the smaller of the Romans, sitting facing the rear beside his friend. He leaned to draw the curtains closer. "Tros, did you lose any money?"

"I betted on Yellow."

"*Dioscuri!* Why? How did you know? Who told you?"

"One of the queen's officers."

"There! Orosius, didn't I tell you it was a put-up job? Tros, Polyclem the banker had it all set for Red to win. He has been planning it since last year —spent a fortune on it. This is a trick of Cleopatra's—and a smart trick, too —to put us Romans in peril. When enough Romans have been murdered by the crowd to make a good showing she will turn out the troops to protect the rest of us—and then claim credit for being the friend of the Roman people!"

Orosius grunted. "Have you heard the rumor that she intends to put every Roman of military age aboard that fleet of rotten ships and send us all to Cassius in Syria?"

"Of course I've heard it. Ugh! Cassius would be a fine host! He is so avaricious and mean, he would make a cold in the head pay dividends! This may be part of the inducement, to make rotten ships look safer to us than a riotous city!"

"I have not even packed," said Orosius.

"Then you'd better do it, if you don't want your belongings looted," said the other.

"I intend to stay here. Like you, my friend, I came here to enjoy myself and not be liable to military conscription. I hope this wantoning queen may catch the plague!"

"Anyhow, Tros, we are grateful to you for the protection of your litter."

There was more protection than Tros could explain, although the two Romans took for granted that he had an armed escort. Tros had brought no escort with him. But he could hear the tramp of armed men, on either side of the litter. Was he under arrest? Had he angered the queen too deeply? Were the queen's guards obeying a secret order to escort him to a dungeon? He found that hard to believe, but it was possible. He peered through the curtain. One glance was enough. It changed him from a man with heart-ache to a man whose heart

thumped with the surge of daring. He leaned against the back of the litter and, for the first time since he had watched the fire devour his trireme, laughed with the love of life.

It was an almost noiseless belly-laugh, homeric, huge, a familiar, humorous compliment to fortune. Not luck. Fortune. Tros never flattered luck. He played his own men fair; so forging fortune on the anvil of events that, though it might seem to fall from heaven, it was his by right of deeds well done and loyalty well led. It stirred the roots of his warrior's humor.

"You laugh, Tros. What on earth do you find to laugh at—you and your burned trireme! Do you find our predicament funny?"

"No, no, I laugh at memories. Where do you wish to be set down?"

"At the house of Polyclem the banker. We must find out what is to be done to prevent that cursed queen from ruining us all."

THE clanking thirty-inch marching step of men in armor was a key to the right of way through even Alexandrine rioters in quest of heads to break before the city police should interfere. It was only unarmed, unescorted Romans who were being made to wish, for once in their lives, that they looked like other people. Tros' guests dived through the curtains and into a house almost before the litter had come to a halt. Then a snub-nosed face with one eye, under a crestless helmet, peered through the off-side curtains.

"Where now, master?"

"To wherever *she* is!" Conops, alive and saucy, was absolute proof that Conops' charge was out of harm's reach. Somebody — probably Conops — must have fooled the queen. Hero could not possibly be a prisoner in Pelusium; otherwise Conops would be there too, or else be dead.

The face vanished. The litter proceeded on its way toward the Rhakotis docks.

"Conops! Climb in."

Seaman style, as if he were rolling into a hammock, Conops invaded the litter and squatted, facing Tros. His one eye was as alert and shameless as a bird's. His smile was of brass, his armor as bright as polishing could make it. There wasn't a hint in his manner that anything on earth was unusual, or even dangerous.

"Is the hurt leg all right, master?"

"Well enough. You disobedient rogue! I sent you in charge of the men to Pelusium. Where are they?"

"All safe, master; all accounted for. Seven of 'em died of wounds on the way down-river, but the rest of the wounded have got 'em a wench apiece to cherish 'em and they'll be fighting fit again in no time. Sigurdsen's in charge; he's bled enough to fill a water-cask, but he's well enough already to crave a crack at me with his battle-axe.

"The men are billeted in five villages, all within sound of a bugle-blast; the flies are bad, but the grub's good, liquor scarce and wenches plenty. There was a bit o' trouble with the village menfolk, but we didn't touch marketable virgins, so there wasn't much they could do about it. All the way down-Nile we'd no trouble at all, barring a couple of fights or so, and one man caught by a crocodile. The fool went swimming. But I saved his armor. Near Pelusium a black he-slave belonging to Esias' partner came up-river looking for us, and then I knew we'd reached the end of a run o' luck and had the dirty end o' trouble to begin on."

"What mischief have you been up to now?"

"Saving your grace and presence, master, I was forced to give a licking to the lady you said was to mind my orders. She can fight back. She was tougher licking than a lad o' twice her weight,

what with her pulling a knife, and me not wanting to spoil her good looks, and one thing and another. But she's your woman. You said she was to mind me. I made her do it."

"Uh-huh!"

"She's in Esias' office. Old Esias has offered her some slave-girls and a soft bed, but she made him dig out armor that really fits her. Last I saw of her, an hour ago, she was watching the smiths make a change in the set of a shoulder-piece. Esias is scared half-crazy."

Tros scowled. "Understand me. If she wants you flogged, I will do it. Even if I think you did right, I will do it. You have laid your hand on your superior. If she complains to me, you will take the consequences."

"Aye, aye, master."

"Tell your story."

"ESIAS' partner's black slave came up-Nile and warned us that the queen's men in Pelusium were watching for a lady calling herself Hero. Seems the queen had reports from her spies. Like as not that dog Tarquinius, that you saw fit not to kill, had told all about your swapping one princess for another. Or maybe it was just the bad luck along of changing a girl's name, same as changing a ship's. Anyhow, the queen knew. A man had killed a racing camel, carrying a secret message along the sea-road from Alexandria to Pelusium, ordering the arrest of a woman named Hero; and the commander of Pelusium, Pausanias, had sent for Esias' partner to warn him to detain her and hand her over if she should turn up. He'd sent a lieutenant and twenty men up-river to look for her.

"That was when the trouble started between her and me. Right then. She was for setting an ambush for the queen's men, and then for fighting our way across the border and sending word to you. You never saw the like o' the way she tried to take command, until I'd proved I'd sew her up in a sail if she didn't obey me, same as you said, 'board-ship fashion, quick and handy and no back-talk."

"Did you hurt her?"

"No more than I had to, master. She'd a wrenched arm that hurted a trifle, along of her pulling a knife, but she can use her arm again, and I let her keep the knife. She'd a bit of a sore rib, and her wrist was skinned. But I was thoughtful not to hurt her good looks."

"Well, what else happened?"

"You remember, she'd two slave girls. One of 'em nursed Sigurdsen so good that he begged leave to buy her. And your lady's generous. She gave him the girl—a nice buxomy, motherly wench and just the thing for that homesick Northman. But I took the other and I made bold to promise her freedom, and a good dowry to boot, if she'd do as I said. She's smaller, but about your lady's shape. They don't look much alike, and their hair's not the same color, but I made her put on your lady's fine clothes and she was passable.

"I learned her. I drilled her. I took that British buckle you'd given your lady, and had her sew it to a girdle and wear it next her skin, as if it was a secret; and I dressed up your lady to look like a slave. She and the slave-girl swapped names—Mariamne her name is—she's from Idumaea—and I took the slave-girl, calling herself Hero, with pretty near all your lady's fine apparel, along ahead in the leading boat, me and the boat's crew acting deferential.

"She's a good girl. She acted pretty when the queen's men from Pelusium came swooping out from an ambush in the reeds. It wasn't us they wanted; Esias' partner's slave had made me sure o' that, so I could afford to be impudent, and I was. I told 'em what they'd catch for pirating your woman, and a nice

new young woman at that, with the bloom still on her. And they didn't like it, master. Your name's big in Pelusium. But they'd their orders, so they carried her off, she play-acting like a sulky queen, same as I'd learned her, treating the officer like so much dirt and saying mighty little. She was easy learning; she'd waited on quality; she knew how a princess behaves when she's out o' patience."

"Well, and then what?"

"Well, master, I tried to guess what you'd ha' done, saving your presence, if you'd ha' been me. Your orders were for me to stay in command of the men. Maybe I should have obeyed orders. Anyhow, I didn't. I made the best dispositions I could, and then left Sigurdsen in charge; he's well enough to keep order, and too bad tempered not to.

"Seemed we were plenty near Pelusium. We were so near I could send Esias' partner's slave for money and a few things we needed. There were villages thereabouts and, as I said, wenches, so I billeted the men. It took a day and a night to get 'em settled down ship-shape and the fighting done with.

"By that time I'd begun to wonder how long it 'ud be before they'd learn they'd got the wrong girl in Pelusium, not to mention me having the right one, in a way of saying, under hatches. Pluto, she's a hot one, master! Sigurdsen was battle-axeing mad about the way I'd handled her. He said she's blood-royal, and me no better than a mangy seaman showing her the butt-end of a boarding pike. One way and another, it was time to find you.

"So I took the eight Jews you'd left with me, and they're good lads. Time I've learned 'em, they'll be fit for any duty. I didn't dare try the canals, for fear o' queen's spies; and I didn't dare take one of our river-boats coastwise, for fear of upsetting it in the shoals; they chop up ugly in the least little bit of a norther and our Jew-lads are no more seamen than I'm a rabbi.

"But we took our boat down-river in the night—only a third of a moon, and the big fort throwing a shadow as black as Baltic tar—and we came on a little jewel of a sponge-ship, in Pelusium for water, with her captain and crew aboard. They were three sheets to the wind on new wine, and only eight of 'em, so we got to sea with no worse than a couple o' knife-cuts, and the sail as full of arrows as a sea-urchin o' spikes. Those sponge-boats can go to windward, and I'd hoped to steal out and be gone before the fort 'ud know it.

"But there'd been a tidy bit o' head-cracking and swearing, and they'd heard us. They opened fire from the fort bastion. So we had to use sweeps, and well we did; it's a mean passage out through that mouth o' the Nile, in the dark.

"The rest was easy, master. We'd a fair wind. And when the spongers learned whose men we are, and saw we'd a fine lady with us, and her calling me such names as only a royal lady would ha' dared to use to any one, seaman or no seaman, and I'd promised 'em money, they made no trouble at all."

"WHEN did you reach Alexandria?"

"One hour after midday, master. And the first thing I saw was the bones of our trireme all black and gutted. Pluto! Then I knew you'd need me, no matter what else. Old Esias was in a panic. First eye-full, he knew who she was. He tried to hide her in a back-room. But all she wanted was armor to fit, and clean linen. I'd laundered what she had on, and it didn't look good, on account o' the mud in the sponge-boat water-cask.

"Old Esias warned me to go and hide in a sail-loft, and he overpaid the sponge-boat crew and bought their sponges to keep 'em quiet. Then he

wrung his hands and said the very sight o' me in the city might start worse trouble than was already. But I got hold of the other two Jews, and eleven fighting men can beat a ship-load o' trouble when they're so minded. I guessed you'd fouled your anchor on a bad lee and might be needing a hand.

"Esias wouldn't tell, but Ahiram said you'd gone to talk to the queen. So it was simple. I'd had the Jew-lads shine our armor, to keep 'em out o' mischief on the sponge-boat. I inspected 'em. We were fit to be any one's escort. So we marched through the city and acted we'd nothing to do but play knucklebones, in among the parked litters. Presently a riot started and we watched 'em chivvying the Romans. They scragged two. Then you came, and a couple o' Romans got in talk with you and got into the litter, so we minded our manners. I reckoned you'd notice us soon enough. That's all, master. Should I ha' stayed at Pelusium?"

Tros peered out. They were approaching the guarded gate of Esias' dock. He looked hard at Conops.

"Had you been anything else than the scoundrelly, damned disobedient, shameless dog that you are, you would have obeyed orders and stayed at Pelusium."

"Yes, master."

"And had you been anything else than the faithful, loyal, dirty-weather comrade that you are, I would reduce you for disobedience."

"Yes, master."

"I am well pleased. I would rather have seen your ugly face this afternoon than a hundred armed men."

Silence.

"You have done well."

Silence. The clank of the ten Jews marching. A shout, and the creak of the opening dock-yard gate.

"It would hurt my heart to have to thrash you."

Silence.

"I will do it, if she wishes."

"Aye, aye, master."

Conops rolled out of the litter before it came to a halt between Esias' office door and the dock where the bones of a splendid ship lay black and useless.

"Escort — 'ten-shun! Lord-Captain's salute—pr*ee*-sent arms!"

Clang.

Then Hero—not so long ago Arsinoe, Queen of Cyprus—ex-Queen of Egypt—outlaw—looking like a fair-haired lad in armor:

"Oh, my lord, my lord, how good to be with you!"

She saluted. There was a bruise beneath the bracelet on her right wrist. Gravely he acknowledged her salute. He loved that. He would have hated a sentimental scene before his men. But there was something else he would have hated more.

"You are in danger," he said.

"I love it!"

His amber eyes admired, but his words were careful:

"It is not the time for blandishments and courtesies. Have you been well served?"

"Aye, royally!" She made a reckless gesture toward the charred ruins of the great ship on which she had fought beside him, in a gale, against the pirates hard by Salamis, when she was a queen and he not yet an outlaw. "And what matter a burned trireme, Tros, when we have such men as this one!"

She looked at Conops. Conops eyed his master, unblinking, brass-faced.

"Fall away, little man. Go and get food and then muster the men. Have them fall in at the dock-side. Send Ahiram to me."

"Aye, aye, master. Lord Captain's escort—'ten-shun! Close order! Right—turn! By the right, quick—march! Left! Left! Left!"

CHAPTER V

"I Am Not She Any Longer. I Am Hero."

CONOPS had not exaggerated. Old Esias was a nervous wreck; he had the office shutters up; the dingy room was lit by little clay lamps, and he was chary of those. He refused to listen to Tros' plan, suddenly conceived and brilliant though it was. His gray-bearded face, shadowy and haggard in the dim light, twitched with anxiety. He kept tapping his old beautiful hands on the table in hysterical efforts to keep calm while Tros explained the plan to Hero. He kept interrupting.

"But I say you shall listen. You shall! This once, before you ruin me and mine, I will say to a she-Ptolemy's face what I think of you and all yours!—Hero now you call yourself! Jezebel it should be! The dogs ate Jezebel. You will wish you had died like Jezebel—yes, and I and my partners—yes, and Tros, too—yes, and many others—if your sister Cleopatra should even dream you are in Alexandria!

"Is this your gratitude for secret aid? For credits—money—clothing—slaves that I have given you? Fool! Ingrate! Were it not for the lord captain I would turn you over to the queen, your sister, to be mocked by the dungeon slaves, and whipped, and torn with hot pincers, and thrown to the dogs on the city dung-heap! Let a palace sorcerer learn but a hint of the truth, and go mumming to the queen and say he saw your face, in a dream, in my office—and then what? Then what! Ruin!

"You, who had a kingdom! Eh? Eh? Only Cyprus, say you? But a kingdom! Was it not a kingdom? And now Boidion has it—a bastard. Will she rest until she has betrayed you and every one of us who knows your secret? Ruin! You trust her? You fool! Will she trust you? She will betray us all to death, lest you betray her!"

Tros tried to calm him. "Peace, Esias."

"Peace? You? You speak to me of peace? You have ruined us all! For the sake of this girl who was walked through Rome at Caesar's chariot tail—spat on by the Roman mob—who should have been strangled in the Tullianum—or sold into slavery to any fool who would buy! Why didn't you kill her on the field of battle? You, Tros, who might have married Egypt! And what a king, what a king for Egypt!"

He paused for breath. Tros sat silent, perceiving that Esias needed the comfort of released anger. Suddenly the old man resumed:

"You craved a girl? You had but to ask for the pick of all my slave-girls. Gladly, gladly, free, I would have given! Or was it a wife you wanted? One word—one word from you to me, and every nobleman in Alexandria who owes me money should have begged you to become his daughter's husband!"

The cause of Esias' anger, less well schooled than Tros in self-control, but careful not to offend Tros' dignity, tried quiet persuasion:

"Esias, it is true, if I were claiming the throne of Egypt, you would be in danger. But I am no longer Arsinoe. I am Hero, wife of the Lord Tros. So forget I was Queen of Egypt until Caesar came. Forget I was ever a Ptolemy—ever this queen's sister. Forget, if you will, that in those days all the Jews in Alexandria preferred me and begged Caesar to—"

"Forget?" He nearly screamed at her. "Jews forget nothing! Never! What a Jew was, he is; and what he is, he will be! Let a whisper—just a little whisper creep into the Jewish quarter—let the Jews even *hope* you are in the city—and then what?"

He snapped his fingers in her face. He

slapped the palms of his hands on the table.

"Then what? There would be an insurrection such as even Alexandria has not seen! My people can fight. They are fools, and they would fight. But could they overcome the queen's troops? We should all be butchered! Once again they would raise their shout: 'Plunder the Jews!' "

Hero shrugged her shoulders. "Not for my sake, Esias. Did the Jews defend me against Caesar? Not they! When Caesar gave them rights and privileges—"

Esias shook both fists at her and almost spat his anger:

"Rights that Cleopatra steals, ignores, denies—day by day, here a little, there a little! It is not Arsinoe whom they love. Why should they love you? It is Cleopatra whom they hate! Why should they not hate her? Could Arsinoe be worse than she is? The woman whom they hardly know seems better to them than the—"

"But I am not she any longer, Esias. I am Hero."

"Hero! You, Tros, my friend—what will you do with her? Where can you go? We have trusted each other. I have your money. Your pearl money, your corn money—you are wealthy. Where will you take your money? Into Syria, on this mad raid, where Cassius will get it, even if he doesn't catch and crucify you? Shall I give you a draft on Rome? How long, do you think, before Antony would be spending your money on sluts and actors—or Octavian spending it on sorcery to cure his pimples! Will you take it to Greece, and let Brutus seize it? The mealy-mouthed hypocrite Brutus is burning cities and selling noble people into slavery for the sake of the last drachma he can wring forth! Will you take it to Spain for Sextus—or to Gaul, for Lepidus to pay his legions?"

"I will leave it here, in your charge," Tros answered. It was time to bring Esias to his senses. He shook the table with his fist. "I will trust you, Esias, until I find you false. Are we friends? For, if we are not, say so."

ESIAS stared, gaped and leaned back in his chair. His old eyes shone like jewels in the yellow lamplight, but he looked suddenly feeble and his face wan and tired.

"Eh! Eh! Your pardon, Lord Captain." He was trembling. "I am old, and I know these Romans. I saw what Pompey did to Mithridates. I saw him plunder Syria—aye, and Jerusalem. And too well I know these Ptolemies, and the wickedness of their women—massacres! Treacheries! Murders!—Have you not loyally served this woman's sister? And what has happened to your trireme?"

He flared again, pointed, leaning forward with an elbow on the table:

"You, girl, who call yourself Hero! Be you false to the brave lord captain in the least matter—in one small trifle—in one slyness—in one wantonness—in one deceit—in one unfaithful gesture of a finger—and may the God of Vengeance damn you into everlasting death!"

She kissed her hand to him. "Your armorers are good, Esias."

Tros laid a hand on his shoulder.

"Esias, the queen expects me to march overland. Sell me that ship that is hauled out, three docks along."

"It leaks, Tros. It—"

"Put the caulkers to work, day and night."

"No, no. Summon Eli. I am overwrought. Do as you will. Have anything you will. I will not listen."

"Say nothing, then. Know nothing. Leave it to me. I shall need a second ship."

"I have no other. They have taken everything in the harbor that will float to deport the Romans."

"Leave that also to me. Send word

through all your stores and workshops that my orders are to be obeyed."

"I will tell Eli."

Eli, a freedman with slate-colored eyes and a stoop, smiled his way into the room and eyed Tros with the air of a doctor waiting to be told the symptoms. He was capable of running all Esias' business. He had been a pupil of Sosigines the astronomer, trained to forget nothing he had ever seen or heard, and to carry exact figures in his head. He loved Tros, because Tros was nearly as quick a calculator as himself.

"Chariots, yes, Lord Captain. Thirty or forty chariots that Caesar ordered—built by Triphales and never paid for—stored in Triphales' warehouse—could be bought, no doubt, at less than half-price. Must be as dry as a bone by now. Wheels would need soaking to make the tires stay on. No harness, but the harness could be bought from Timon, supplier to most of the racing stables, and would be very expensive if made in a hurry—say a night and a day, if Timon's gangs were paid a bonus. Horses? Mules?"

"Yes, and camels—for a baggage-train for three hundred and fifty men. Have them hired and waiting by tomorrow morning. Understand, Eli: I don't want them. But I wish the queen's spies to believe I make ready to march."

Hero interrupted. "What can I be doing?"

"Imitating nothing, nowhere!" said Esias. "I have had a bed brought for you. Go to bed and await your lord." He shook his finger at her. "You! You! Any spy may recognize you, any minute! Do you wish us all to be burned like Tros' ship? You will hide where I tell you, though I change the hiding place ten times over!"

She shrugged carefree shoulders. "I will visit the armorer again, to have my breast-plate fitted."

"I will send a slave-girl to be fitted for it. You will do as I tell you!"

TROS interrupted: "Hero!"

He was speaking for Esias' benefit, and she knew it, but she thrilled to the sound of the new name that Tros had chosen for her, by the Nile, under the stars. There was something competent and gallant about her that made even old Esias stare with approval.

Young—she looked almost a child against the gloom of the office wall, with the lamplight shining on her fair hair—hers was the smile of youth that knows not yet, but means to know; that did not yet, but means to do; that has felt the reckless danger-love of nothing more to lose, and all to win. And she had chosen her man, earned him, won him, knew his worth. He should learn hers.

Little she guessed, yet, how he valued her, and she was likely not to learn that from his lips; Tros was no poet, no troubador, but a man of action, using what he found good for present needs and future far-viewed purpose. But that he understood her, as no one else had ever done, she began to perceive. That gave her confidence, which stole away the Ptolemy suspicion from her smile and left it clean, audacious, true.

"You will do as Esias says."

She mocked him, imitating Conops: "Aye, aye, master!"

One of his big hands seized both of hers, and she bit her lips. He was about as able to be gentle as a head-sea. But she didn't flinch, didn't try to withdraw her hands.

"You have not become a courtier's plaything. You have thrown in your lot with a man who owns no roof, no ship, and who must hack his way to what he will have—aye, and will do. You may look not to me for safety, other than as you and I together snatch it forth from danger. I live dangerously. Such is my religion. Sloth, ease, idleness—the love of safety and the fear of death—are no food for the soul. I will no more flinch from endangering you than me, if I be-

lieve we can win. But I see no sense in frightening Esias, nor in peril for its own sake. So, until we go, you will obey Esias."

"I will not obey him! Have I thrown away a throne to run his errands?"

Tros laughed. "I have run Esias' errands—aye, and he mine—in the teeth of Rome! He has asked what I will of you, but he himself has said it. I will have you faithful. Comfort and mere obedience I can have of any boughten wench, who must obey or be whipped. But I wish to trust you as I do my own soul. If you wish that, you shall trust me also. We will have no secrets from each other. I have told you my plan. We have agreed on it. Having agreed, you obey. To the hilt, with all the mind you have, and all the marrow of your being, you will slam the meaning of my orders home into the teeth of destiny, and you will make me proud that I have such a woman to trust."

She stiffened her chin. "Did you hear him, Jew? I will obey because he said it. But—"

Esias interrupted. "Never in all my life have I needed a woman to tell me what orders to give! You will go to your room and be quiet. Go now! I will send you some slaves. Examine them. Use your intelligence. Select one who is fit to serve you as Conops serves Tros. I will send you men-slaves, women-slaves and eunuchs. If you choose the right one, that one will be my wedding-gift. But if you choose the wrong one—"

"Dealer in drabs! I have chosen a life. Do you think I need you to teach me how to choose a servant? Very well, I will go to my cage. And you may try, if you will, behind my back to make the Lord Tros regret that it wasn't you who chose his woman!"

She laid her hand on Tros' shoulder. "He will say I am the daughter of a drunken father, and the younger sister of two sluts whose milk is poison. What will you say?"

"I will speak of munitions, and money, and men," Tros answered. "There is a week's work to be done in two nights and a day."

It was nearly as hard for him as for Esias to take a girl into his confidence. He was already busy with stylus, beginning to write on waxed wood details of stores, tools and work to be done.

"Observe this, Eli—"

CHAPTER VI

"One of the Queen's Ears."

THERE were dead rats. Some said they had fled from Tros' Trireme when it caught fire, but that didn't account for their lying around dead, in dozens. The gloomy Olympus, clutching a purse beneath his black robe, prodded a dead rat with his tau-handled staff as he stood talking to Tros under the flare of a guttering torch, in the doorway of the smithy, where Tros was watching the most skillful armorers in the world convert old war-material to new. They were forging portable emplacements for the deadly arrow-engines saved from the burned trireme.

"Has the queen sent you to read my thoughts and tell them to her?" Tros asked.

"She didn't send me. I came for the money of which you spoke. Esias gave it to me. When I next see the queen I will say I spoke with you about the stars that just now foretell danger from a woman."

It was a strange hour to choose for a visit. He could have had the money by sending his personal slave. But Olympus, who had even known some of Caesar's secrets, and had taught the incredulous Caesar some of the rudiments of astrology, was a learned ascetic to whom vanity and mystery and an amused self-mockery were one. A good friend, but an exasperating lover of

evasions and ominous hints. He went on speaking:

"I was casting the queen's horoscope, on the palace roof, two hours after dark, while the chariots waited below to take her to Eleusis. They will be gay until dawn at Eleusis, partly to forget this plague that is killing hundreds. *They* fear plague. *She* fears treason. The plague serves her at the moment."

"Aye, and me also. My seamen would have marched unwilling."

Olympus stared. "It is true then that you go by road?"

Tros nodded. He didn't quite trust Olympus. Well-meaning, yes, but a bit too fond of seeming all-wise. Olympus wouldn't betray a friend, but he might drop a hint to the queen, in order, after the event, to appear to have been all-knowing. Tros continued:

"Three of my seamen are ill of the plague. So now the others are willing to march to the world's end. Why else are they gay at Eleusis?"

"Because seven thousand Romans are already being herded on board that fleet of rotten ships. To be sent to Cassius, says the queen, because Cassius demands it. To escape the plague, say they; for they love not Cassius, nor will they admit that they fear the mob or obey the queen. They pretend that they go of their own free will. To escape from our wrath, say the Alexandrines, who will tolerate any infamy whatever except a chariot-race swindle. And it flatters the Alexandrines to see Romans driven from the city. Over the wine at Eleusis they are casting dice to determine who shall fall heir to the Romans' leavings."

Tros snorted. "As good as inviting Cassius to come and protect Romans' property rights! Are they mad?"

"No. Alexandrines. And the queen's guards, under a new commander, are already in possession, so the plunderers will be disappointed. She has sent Leander to command Pelusium—she says, because he is in debt, and might get into legal trouble in the city and therefore could be too easily bribed."

"And you say?"

"That he has gone to Pelusium. I came to tell you."

Tros examined Olympus' sallow face, but the eyes told nothing. No one could guess what Olympus was thinking. He had his own way of making his listener guess.

"Were you speaking of me to the queen?" Tros asked him.

"Yes. We spoke of you. Then she invited me to midnight supper in her pavilion at Eleusis. But she asks too many questions." He smiled. "She remembers too well my answers. It is never safe not to tell her the truth. I said I would rather go and talk to you, even than watch the beauty of naked bodies in lantern-light on Eleusis beach. She is intensely curious to know what the stars have to say about you and women. She and Charmion have quarreled. They are not yet reconciled."

"And—"

"Leander has gone to Pelusium."

"You ominous old raven, keep your Delphic utterances for palace banquets. You are not standing now at the end of a table to remind the revelers of death. Speak me, as I speak you, in plain words."

"Leander is a handsome, unscrupulous man, who would sell next year's prospect for this year's gain—aye, and sell cheap," said Olympus. "Have you heard there was a woman prisoner at Pelusium?"

"Aye." Tros ceased looking sideways at the armorers. "Was, say you? What of her?"

"It is a clear night," said Olympus. "The stars distinctly indicate a crisis when Leander takes over the command at Pelusium. He has almost had time to reach there. And there are pigeons. Before he went he had word with Charmion."

"Pluto! What else have you overheard?"

"That the queen's police are in search of rotting corpses, to destroy them before they infect the whole city. The city police have no right to enter private premises, but the queen's police do as they please. Crinagoras is with them."

"That snooper? Charmion's spy? He hunts plague corpses, say you? That is a curious task for a man of Crinagoras' rank, reptile though he is!"

"Who knows what else he looks for? Did you hear of the slave, who wanted sponges for the palace stables, who is said to have seen a girl in armor? Crinagoras, you may remember, is the man who has found so many dead bodies of suspicious people, and strangely they are always full of dagger-wounds. Crinagoras may be here already. Esias' guards might not dare to refuse to admit him through the dock-yard gate if—they admitted me, for instance—"

"Count me your debtor!"

PLUTO! Why couldn't the man have told his story in ten words! Tros was on his way, cursing because he had given his bodyguard leave to sleep, and they had his armor. What Hero called her "cage" was a suite of three rooms, reached by a stair with an iron reinforced door that opened into a narrow passage between Esias' office and a warehouse, by the dock where the bones of the trireme lay. It was two hundred yards from the smithy, by devious alleys, clamorous with hammer-blows, thronged with shadowy, hurrying men in smoky torchlight. Every yard of the distance was cluttered with war-material and ship's fittings of one sort or another, and with slaves who counted stores and struggled to bring order out of chaos.

Esias' sheds could have fitted out almost an army, in time; but they could not pretend to do one thing, and do another within forty-eight hours, without pandemonium of yelling foremen, scurrying slaves and clamorous, impossible demands from petty officers, not one of whom knew Tros' actual intentions. Conops guessed, but not even he had been told, for fear an unguarded word might inform the queen's spies. Only Tros and Hero knew the entire plan. Even Eli and Esias believed that the ships were being secretly readied to carry baggage for men on the march.

By torchlight, from the midst of men who toiled at the packing and wrapping of war munitions, overseen by agonized storekeepers who tried to keep count, Conops' sharp eye noticed Tros thrusting his way through the throngs. Conops knew crisis when he saw it. He blew his whistle. The ten Jew bodyguards knew Conops and his knife-hilt way of speeding laggards. They awoke from sleep on wheat-straw on a corner, snapping armor-buckles, ready for a fight before their eyes were open. One of them ran with Tros' sword, another with his helmet; a third clapped a helmet awry on Conops' head.

"Fall in! Lively there! All ready, master! Bodyguard, at the double, forward!"

They went through the crowd like a battering-ram, until Tros halted them at the edge of the drunken torchlight, on the dock, between Esias' office-building and the burned ship. There were long rows of packages that looked as if they were ready for mules and camels. Between those and the office was a long, wide, shadowy fairway. Midway down that, beneath a hanging lantern, was a group of armed men, bending over something. Tros strode forward. Conops kept his voice low:

"Line up behind him—two deep! Leave him room to step back! Bodyguard, draw—swords! Now, wait for the word. You, Jeshua, remember your point, the way I told you. A sword isn't an axe, nor a cook-spoon either. Hold

your wrist high—foot, knee, rump and shoulder all behind your wrist—lunge quick—slow recover. I don't want to have to find a new Jew to fit your armor, so mind my teaching! Left! Left! You're out o' step, Simeon. Left! Left! Into wedge, like lightning when I give the word, and clear your captain's left flank. Take care to give him sword room. Halt! On your toes now—ready!"

AT the edge of the circle of lantern-light, at the feet of a group of thirteen men, twelve of whom leaned on spears, lay a girl in a pool of blood. The lamplight gleamed on a polished shoulder-piece, but she had no weapon, no other armor. She was quite dead, face downward. Her dress was plain white, blotched with the blood from a dozen wounds. The thirteenth man, who had been down on one knee raising the girl's head by the hair, stood up, with his hand on his hilt, and faced Tros. He had a pleasant enough smile and easy manners. He looked confident, uncrafty, in the prime of life, strong, capable. He was nearly as big as Tros, and better armed, for he was wearing mail, whereas Tros had on only a helmet.

"Your woman?" the man in armor asked. "Who do you suppose killed her?"

Tros drew his sword. "Are these *your* men?"

"The queen's men, hunting bodies that have died of plague. Who are you?"

"There is blood on their spears. Who are you?"

"Who asks?"

"Are you Crinagoras?"

"You know me evidently. Better indulge your good judgment, hadn't you? I am used to more respectful manners."

"Finder of daggered corpses! Show your warrant."

"To whom? Are you Tros of Samothrace?"

"I am who I am. Show your warrant."

"Queen's officers need none. Do you know this girl? Look closely. Did she come, do you happen to know, on a sponge-boat? It appears to me remarkable, Captain Tros, that a dead girl, wearing a piece of armor, should excite you so that you forget your manners."

"Draw, if my manners offend you!"

"If I draw, it will be in the queen's name!"

"She shall need a new night-cart captain! Draw!"

"See here, Tros—"

Crinagoras' men rallied silently behind him. Their spears became a hedge of bronze points. From behind Tros' back the sound of Conops' long knife-blade tapping the palm of his hand punctuated his low-voiced comments:

"Wait for the word o' command, I tell you! Wait for it. Then make it sudden, forming wedge on number one."

Tros voice had grown deadly quiet. "I won't warn you again, Crinagoras."

But Crinagoras took his time. He tugged as if his sword was too tight in the scabbard. Suddenly he stepped backward. His men's ranks closed around him. They began to retreat, like a big, dark bristling crab, into the pitch-black darkness beyond the zone of the lantern-light.

TROS gave no word of command. The crash of battle was as sudden as the thunder of sails that are taken aback in a flurry of wind at midnight. The only shout was from three of Crinagoras' men, who fell like gutted cattle and lay bellowing for quarter. The spearmen's ranks broke at the first assault. Tros' men, obeying Conops' sharp, whip-crack orders, lunged at their faces, forcing them on guard, points upward, and the spears were worse than useless once a swordsman had got close. They tried to give ground to regain the advantage of length

of weapon. Tros' men kept too hard after them. Backed on to their heels, they were gutted, or stabbed in the throat—killed to the last man.

But Tros had to deal with a man of a different type, a courtier whose trade was murder. He was well armed and a cunning swordsman. He parried Tros' lunges with desperate skill, edging his way back toward the light, with his back to the wall, until he could turn with the light behind him and in Tros' eyes. Then he took the offensive, and for a minute he held it, until one of Tros' terrific lunges pierced his cuirass. The inbent broken edges of the metal tore him to the bone—hurt him—slowed him—limited his reach. It put most of the burden on wrist and elbow. He dropped to one knee, as if beaten, and stabbed upward, but Tros sprang clear and was at him again almost before he could recover stance. It was only a question then of how long he could last, how soon another thrust would pierce his armor. Conops, having made sure that the bellowers for quarter were no longer in need of it, wiped his knife on the clothing of one of them and came and watched the duel, fascinated by the ruthless, faultless skill with which Tros wore down and weakened his man.

Crinagoras cried out at last and took the risk of throwing up his left hand.

"Hold! Hold!"

Tros stepped backward. Conops yelled:

"Watch him, master!"

The trick failed by less than the depth of the sweat of a man's skin. Crinagoras drew his long dagger and sprang. It was Tros' left fist, not his sword, that sent the queen's man reeling on his heels against the wall. The dagger went spinning among the shadows as the first blow nearly stunned him. His sword fell at his feet with a clatter that nearly silenced his surrender:

"I yield!"

He had forfeited the right to single combat: even the right to surrender. Such a trick as his was outlaw, even among pirates. Conops approached with his knife-point flickering like a snake's tongue and picked up the sword. He didn't even offer it to Tros. It was a dishonored thing.

"You yield what?" Tros demanded. "You treacherous dog, your life isn't yours to yield!"

Crinagoras was panting for breath, and a pain, but he forced out a frantic answer:

"What could a dead man tell you? Better listen to me! Spare my life, and I may save yours! There is yet time."

"Bring him this way, Conops."

"Did you hear him? Follow the lord captain, or I'll—"

Tros went and stood by the girl's dead body. He raised the head—saw the face of the girl whom Esias had lent to dress Hero's hair. She had been sent to the cells for stealing Hero's money—a light-haired Circassian, chosen because recently arrived from Athens and very unlikely to know who Hero was or to whom it might pay to betray her. The ten Jews, their work finished, gathered in a group behind Conops. Tros and Crinagoras faced each other, in lamplight.

"You have asked for your life, Crinagoras. But you have too long worn a manly cloak above a beast's heart. What is your bid for your life?"

"Beast, you call me? Some one must do the dark errands, Captain Tros, or could a throne survive? I am no torturer. I tear no secrets from the living victim. I have made many a secret die and do no more harm."

"I will give you to my men to kill, this instant, unless you tell me why you are here."

"If I tell, you will have to protect me, Captain Tros—I would rather die on your men's knives than as a betrayer of the queen's trust."

"That is for me to decide. You have one minute."

CONOPS drew near with his knife. A long knife, to a beaten man, looks worse than a sword. Crinagoras spoke quickly:

"A rumor reached the queen's ears that you had bribed Pausanias, who commands at Pelusium."

"So? Why should I bribe that drunkard? Come on, speak up!"

"Pausanias is supposed to have released a female prisoner, who came by boat, wearing armor, and was seen in Esias' office."

"Reached the queen's ear, say you?"

"I am one of the queen's ears."

"You flatter yourself! Charmion is both ears! Did Charmion send you?"

"It was she with whom I spoke, yes."

"She and the queen had a recent quarrel?"

"Yes. Charmion urged the queen to have you seized and executed for treason."

"And—? Come on now—out with the whole of it!"

"The queen said you are too valuable, and too manageable to need killing.

They quarreled, accusing each other of being in love. The queen called Charmion a barren Fury, poisoned by the bile of unrequited passion. Those were her words. I heard them."

"So—you are Charmion's retort to the queen's jest?"

"She sought to teach the queen a lesson. Having heard this rumor—"

"From whom?"

"From me. She sent me to investigate it—"

"Unknown to the queen?"

"Yes. It is Charmion's office to discover treasons that any women have a hand in."

"And—"

"She sent me to look for this girl—and to kill her—why not? Sooner than leave another thankless problem for the queen to worry over!"

"Did she name her?"

"Hero."

"What else?"

"Then to kill you, if possible, also for treason, and to bring both bodies to the palace—"

"For the queen's education?"

"Yes and to prove Charmion's loyal vigilance in spite of anger. She said: what is to prevent you from joining Cassius, and with him invading Egypt, to put this woman Hero on the throne? That is the whole truth."

"Yes, it sounds like a part of the truth," said Tros. "You may have your life. Lock him up, Conops. Set a watch to keep him from having speech with any one."

"Aye, aye, master."

Crinagoras tried to get in another word in his own behalf, but Tros was gone, striding down the dark passage to the door at the foot of the stairs. The door was locked. He thundered on it with his sword-hilt—thundered—thundered—and no answer.

CHAPTER VII

"Say I Will March at Daybreak."

ESIAS' slave opened the door at last—his old personal, confidential fetch-and-carry man, with a cataract on one eye and a pock-marked face of the color of damp smoke—a slave who knew everything and understood nothing—lantern in hand, so sure of his cripple's advantage that he dared to stand in Tros' way and make admonishing gestures.

"No one here now, Lord Captain. She has—"

Tros pushed past him. Esias was at the stairhead—unmistakably Esias, even though the gloom half hid him; Esias' shadow was as personal to himself as the smell of a familiar book. He retreated past a curtain, Tros after him, and the two stood together, for a moment speechless, Tros prodding the carpeted floor with the point of his naked sword. In that moment he could almost have killed his old friend, and Esias knew it.

"Tell me. I listen."

Esias hesitated. He and Tros were brother members of one Mystery. Violence between them would have been sacrilege. But he could smell the sweat of battle and he knew the vigor of Tros' anger. The room was tidy. The big bed looked as if no one had ever slept in it. In the next room, facing the open door, was the dressing table—bare—no pots of unguents—not a sign of a woman, not even a sniff of perfume. The room reeked of strewn herbs, said to be effective against the plague. A whole gang of slaves must have been busy at top speed, but they had done their perfect work and vanished.

Esias found words at last: "She has obeyed me. Did you not so order it?"

Tros restrained himself, in silence. Esias, fighting emotion, spoke on:

"Lord Captain, Olympus came to me, an hour ago, for the purse of money. I gave it to him. Then he spoke mysteriously, saying queen's men come searching for bodies that died of plague. 'The plague,' he said, 'is deadly, but the queen fears treason. Should they find here what the queen dreads, who shall save you?' And he added: 'There are queen's troops on the march, none knows whither. Could the lord captain resist a thousand of the queen's troops? But would he not try to resist? Better let there be no treason to discover.' And I understood I must save us all from a charge of treason, so I acted in great

haste."

Tros spoke, through set teeth: "Curses on Olympus and his raven's croaking! Curses on his mystery making! What then?"

"Said you not she should obey me?"

"Yes, I said it."

Suddenly Esias' self-restraint broke. Age, anxiety, indignation, racial temperament and love for Tros all melted into one Semitic anguish that shook him, tore him, stuttered into agonized invective:

"Ruin! Treason! Confiscation! Do you understand that? Do you care? Do you care? All this—me—my partners—sons—grandsons—at the mercy of a girl you wanton with—you! You! Did I invite her? Do I love her? Is she anything to me or to mine, that I should suffer torture for her—confiscation—crucifixion—slavery for all my family—because you, you madman, rut like a bull—for the queen's sister—an outlaw—a Ptolemy ingrate—a rebel—a—"

"Tell what happened!"

Tros laid both hands on his hilt. The blade beneath them bent under the pressure of impatience. But no need, nor agony, nor anger might excuse violence between him and Esias. He waited.

"Happened? Nothing! Nothing happened! I never saw—heard—had speech with her! I never knew her! She never darkened my door—never fouled my dwelling! And you—what have you done?—slain the queen's men?—brought vengeance upon me?"

Tros went and opened the window-shutter—thrust his head out—shouted:

"Conops!"

Silence, solid with the roar of the workshops — footsteps, running — then Conops' voice:

"I have him lashed to a spar in the rope-shed, master."

"Fetch your trumpet. Sound the assembly—all hands! Send Ahiram to me, here."

"Aye, aye, master."

"And now, Esias—?"

"Tros, Olympus' words had shaken me. I brought in slaves to bundle up her things. I drove her forth, in secret, in the shadows, down the floor of the dock to the waterside."

"Alone?"

"No—the slave I gave her and three others. She went away in your little sail-boat—she and her baggage. Oh, good riddance to her! Tros, you—"

"Left she no message for me?"

ALARM awoke, vibrant, awful, sudden. Conops' golden trumpet clarioned the "Stand to arms and fall in!" The din of the workshops ceased on the clang of an armorer's sledge. Then a drum-beat—the tump-burra-tump of the signalers marking the line for the men to form on—torchlight, the clatter of weapons and hurrying feet. Esias talked on:

"Tros, there was a slave-girl—that hairdresser—the thief—the Circassian girl who stole Hero's money and was waiting to be whipped—I had her fetched—put a piece of armor on her—I told her the police had come to take her to the execution place—so she ran—"

"What was Hero's message to me?"

Tump-burra-tump-burra-tump—"Fall in there!—archers in the rear rank!—where's your helmet, you?—go get it!—hit that man, decurion—is he drunk or asleep?—well, wake him up!—squad-commanders, roll-call! — here — here — here—here!—From the left—by squads—number!—"

"What was Hero's message to me, Esias?"

Ahiram came three or four steps at a time, breathless. He saluted, waited, eyeing Tros with a kind of sulky what-new-madness-now? look.

"Ahiram, have the slaves finished caulking that hull on the ways, three docks along?"

"Aye."

"And are the arrow-engines from the trireme aboard?"

"Aye, there's barely room to work ship, so many gadgets."

"Launch her! Take fifty men to do it, and warp her around to the pier at the end of this dock. Get the water-casks into the after hold. They're full and ready! Manhandle 'em out of the wine-shed. They're in a row by the door."

"In the dark?"

"In an hour, or I'll have a new lieutenant! Then load her—every last package that's ready—ammunition on deck, under paulins."

"All those mules? Those camels?"

"Dunderhead! Am I a cattle-boat captain? I let you go a-wenching in Rhakotis while another did your work, because I wanted the slatterns to tell the queen's spies we are marching overland. I hired the cattle for the same reason. Fall away and turn to!—Esias, some of the trireme's gear is under hatches in that wine-ship that came in yesterday in ballast. She's to follow me to Pelusium. I need a crew."

Esias wrung his hands. "Tros, Tros, my crews have all been pressed to take the Romans to Syria."

Tros leaned through the window:

"Conops!"

"Coming, master!"

"Now Esias! What was Hero's message?"

Esias fumbled in his clothing and produced a folded scrap of linen. He unfolded it and gave it to Tros with a trembling hand, irritably beckoning the old slave to hold the lantern closer. Greek characters had been scrawled on the linen with carmine pigment.

"Tros, Tros, let not a woman's pen cause enmity between us!"

Tros read in silence:

My lord:

I obey the Jew because you said it. And it is true, my presence here is too dangerous. But he said not whither I should go. Therefore lest this fall into the wrong hands, be the destination secret. I will rejoin you. As I trust you, trust me.

Hero.

TROS crunched the scrap of linen. Conops appeared at the stair-head.

"Yes, master? All hands under arms and ready! Where's the lady?"

"You're to command the wine-ship."

"Aye, aye, master."

"Pick a crew—you may have the eight Gauls and as many more as you think you'll need. Follow my ship to Pelusium."

"Aye, aye, master."

"Wait!"

Esias clutched Tros' arm. Echoed and re-echoed by the limestone housefronts along a paved street in the distance, came drum-and-tuba music and the clanking tramp of armed men marching amid a tumult.

"Tros, Tros!" said Esias.

Tros was gone, Conops at his heels, to the roof by a winding stairway, through cluttered attics, to a trap-door and a pigeon-loft, thence along a parapet to a temple roof, from where, between winged sphinxes, they could see northward and southward the full length of the city from the Hepta-stadium to Lake Mareotis. There were priests on the roof, like sleepy monkeys staring at catastrophe.

Beneath, in a blood-red river of smoky torchlight, poured a column of mounted men, infantry, loaded wagons. Queen's cavalry were leading, plumes and pennoned lances dancing like flood-borne flotsam—plumed horses' heads—torchlight on brass—staccato hoof-beats. Then a Roman standard, followed by a column of men who marched too slackly to be regular Roman troops, but they all wore Roman helmets, Roman armor. Even from that height, at that angle, it was easy to tell they were out

of training. They were men of the Gabinian legions, left behind by Caesar—well armed, but a rabble. Few but the officers and centurions had ever seen Rome. Wagons. Wagons.

Presently another standard, and the remnants of another legion. Behind that, away up the street to the right as far as the flares reflected on Lake Mareotis, shuffled a mob of burdened slaves and men too poor to own slaves, who carried their own baggage: Roman citizens—exiles, old enough and not too old to serve, but who had never marched with a legion—food for Cassius' ambition—on their way to be drilled, marched to an unknown battlefield, and buried—or perhaps to be drowned on their way—or to die of plague in overloaded, rat-infested hulls. The street was lined with women, most of them wives being left behind—wives and children wailing, shrilling, shouting. Tuba music — drum-beat — mob-roar—tramp-tramp-tramp. Eddies among the women, where gangs of roughs elbowed their way to pelt the departing Romans with rotten vegetables.

To the left, the Heptastadium was a seven-furlong stream of smoky crimson. It looked like lava pouring along the harbor-surface. Thousands of torches revealed hundreds of boats—fishing-boats, ships' boats, barges, any boat whatever that could be pressed into service—all with their sterns to the causeway, ready to take the Romans to the ships that lay at anchor waiting for them. The ends of the wide Street of Canopus, east and west, were blocked by Cleopatra's infantry, presumably to keep the departing Romans from having a change of heart and bolting east or west into the city.

Conops spoke: "Where is the lady?"

Tros told him, very careful what he said about Esias, because Conops kept no middle ground worth mentioning between friend and enemy.

"Master, I could take the Gauls and a boat and maybe find her. She can't have gone far."

"She has her rights," Tros answered, "you and I our duty. She obeyed my order to obey Esias. Now she demands that I trust her. I will—aye, even as I trust you. If she is the woman I take her to be, she has more brains than her sister. That is why Caesar preferred Cleopatra to her. He could outwit Cleopatra. I believe she will make for Pelusium, and we may overtake her. This is a grim night, Conops! Do you know why those Romans are leaving?"

"Queen's orders. Good riddance, I'd say. A-sea or ashore, master, we could beat that lot with our few!"

"Aye, they're a rabble." He began to talk to take his mind off Hero. "Cassius—unless I'm out on my reckoning—means to invade Egypt suddenly."

"Across that desert?"

"By land and sea, both. He wants those Romans out of reach of the Alexandrine mob, that might tear them to pieces at the first news of a Roman raid. He would like to be able to boast to the Roman senate of how thoughtful he was for Romans' safety. Cassius craves to do what Caesar did—loot Egypt for corn and money. But he hasn't Caesar's guts, nor Caesar's brains. Caesar let the world go hang or await his pleasure while he took what he wanted. Cassius clings to Syria and Palestine, that writhe in his grip. Caesar would have snatched Egypt and then have turned back on Syria. Cassius is a mean man, Conops; an envious, treacherous, spiteful coward frightened by a bold man's chance. He despises his ally Brutus. Yet he fears Brutus might join Antony and march against him unless he marches into Asia Minor to Brutus' aid, against Antony. So he hesitates. I count on Cassius to make a move as stupid as this move the queen has made to subject and humiliate me. We could be caught here like rats in a trap if

Charmion were not so sure we intended to march by land."

"The lady Charmion?"

"Aye."

"I warned you against that one, master. All the flat-breasted ones ever I knew were fit for nothing but to spite their betters."

"Charmion thinks she serves the queen well—listen!"

CONVERSATION with Conops hadn't helped. Every emotion in him, every instinct, furiously urged him to send or go in search of Hero. It was another—a new alarm that changed irresolution into quick decision. Esias' old smoky-faced slave came hurrying along the parapet, shouting "Lord Tros! Lord Tros!"

He and Conops awaited the man, and temple priests came snooping along roof-tiles to overhear what they might, since private secrets are a temple's principal resource. But Conops rapped a priest on the ear with the back of his knife and thumped another's skull with the hilt. The priests withdrew to a less inconvenient distance.

"Lord Tros! Lord Tros! Come the queen's men to the main gate, and the Lord Esias—"

The old slave nearly fell from the roof in the wind of Tros' and Conops' wake. He followed as fast as he could run, but he wasn't even in time to see them charge past Esias and down the stairs to the dock-side. Fifty men had piled arms and had gone with Ahiram; they had already launched the newly-caulked ship; they were singing the old reprehensible song about what was wrong with Dido, as they hauled the ship around to the pier. Already the ton-weight water-butts were being rolled from the wine-shed. (There were wine-casks going too, but that was for the overseer to prevent if he could, or to tally if he could, in the darkness.)

Down at the end of the yard the main gate thundered to the assault of spear-butts and the shouts of men demanding admission.

"Open! In the queen's name, open!"

A hundred men fell in behind Tros and he marched them and formed them in front of the gate.

"Front rank, draw—swords!—Archers—ready!"

Then he opened the heavily grilled port and looked through.

"Open!" A captain of queen's police, with fifty men behind him, thrust a sword-point through the grille to emphasize impatience. He missed Tros by a hair's breadth. Conops seized the sword and broke it. Tros ordered ten archers and a decurion to the nearest roof, whence they could command the approach to the gate.

"In whose name?"

"In the queen's name."

"I know the queen is at Eleusis. Who sent you?"

"Where is Captain Crinagoras?"

"Oh, is that your trouble? You may have him and his booty. You may send in four-and-twenty men without their weapons."

Evidently these men lacked the queen's authority. Tros' guess was right: they were Charmion's messengers, sent out to prove to the queen how vigilant was Charmion, how treacherous was Tros, how wise the queen would be to listen always to Charmion's secret advice. Their officer agreed to Tros' terms—something he would never have dared to do if the queen herself had sent him.

Tros' ten-man bodyguard, at Conops' signal, came and stood beside the postern, ready to deal with any armed man, or with any attempt at a rush. Tros opened the postern and counted aloud, until twenty-four were inside. Then he shot the bolt again and told the officer to wait.

"Fetch Crinagoras. Fetch those dead

men. Fetch that slave-girl's body. Lay it on a sheep-skin."

The dead bodies, and their armor and weapons, were laid in a line in the lantern-light. Crinagoras came limping from the bite of the cord with which Conops had lashed him to a spar in the rope-loft. He had recovered a bit of his insolence; he recognized the queen's police and half-suspected Tros was in deperate straits. But he had his eye on Tros' sword, and he could hardly have failed to see that the police were unharmed.

"What now?" he demanded, pitching his voice to a neutral note.

"Your friends have come for you. You and your booty go back to the Lady Charmion, who sent you. Tell her to tell the queen whatever lies she pleases. Say I will march at daybreak, straight down the Street of Canopus, and if she dares let her try to stop me!"

Crinagoras laughed.

"If I were you," he said, "which I thank the gods I am not, I would rather quarrel with the queen herself than with the Lady Charmion. The queen has magnanimity. Charmion has only zeal. However, when they crucify you, I will come and cut your throat in return for your having spared me. Until then, Lord Captain, farewell."

CHAPTER VIII

"We Shall All Have to Die for the Woman!"

TROS sent fifty of Esias' slaves into the city, most of them to spread rumors, but some to try to find responsible officials and beg them to clear the Street of Canopus before daylight, so that he might march away unhindered. With the queen at Eleusis, a sea-shore resort a few miles eastward of the city, and most of her court there roistering and bathing as a precaution against plague, it would have been easy enough for the officious Charmion to contrive a raid on Esias' dock-yard. He had to provide against that, and he knew no way to do it except to tempt her to try a less dangerous trick. She could allege almost any excuse; and almost any officer commanding queen's troops would obey Charmion, it was so well known she had the queen's ear, managed the queen's spies and secretly did for the queen what Cleopatra herself could not do openly without too great scandal.

But Tros understood the embittered virgin. He knew what delight she took in surprises and suddenly-sprung traps. He outguessed her accurately, counting on her closing the eastern city gate against him, if he could convince her that he really intended to march overland. She could pretend she believed he was marching on Eleusis to take vengeance for his burned trireme. It would be easy for her to forge the evidence. Or she could truthfully say she had heard that Arsinoe, calling herself Hero, had escaped from Pelusium and had come to the city to raise a rebellion with Tros' little army to aid her. It would be a simple business, one any ambitious officer could manage, to start a fight near the Gate of Canopus and massacre Tros and his entire force before the queen at Eleusis could even suspect what was happening. It would not be the first time that Charmion had interfered, on her own responsibility, and had saved herself from dismissal or worse by claiming she had saved the queen's life.

A miracle had to be done. Tros did it. He had loaded, manned and warped into the harbor, two ships, half an hour before daybreak. The seasonal north wind filled his sails as he headed westward, out through the mouth of the Harbor of Happy Return. In the torch-lit darkness he easily slipped past an anchored fleet, on which pandemonium reigned as the luckless Romans were brought aboard by the boat-load, quar-

reling, complaining, protesting, shouting from ship to ship. He was not even hailed until he had passed through the anchored line of harbor guard-ships, whose captains probably supposed two freighters with corn or wine were passing seaward. They hailed too late, and though they might have slipped anchor and overtaken him, they were too busy watching the Romans.

At break of day he turned eastward, with the Pharos lighthouse on his right hand and well out of range of the Pharos archers. The sky was cloudy to the northward and he was dreading rough weather even more than the risk of pursuit. Both ships were unseaworthy. They were loaded almost awash. Their decks were so crowded with gear, last-minute loads and exhausted men, that it was hardly possible to manage the sails. Rowing was even more of a problem. The oars that had been saved from the trireme were too long. There were only hastily improvised tholes. Tros' oarsmen were splendidly trained and took pride in being masters of the sea in almost any weather, but they were used to well designed oar-ports, room and calculated leverage—used to a ship that leaped to the catch of the blades as they swung together. However, with the north wind almost on the port beam and a dangerous lee shore to starboard, there was nothing for it but the oars.

There were more than a hundred miles to go, by any reckoning, and a girl only the gods knew where, who drew at Tros' heart-strings. She was probably somewhere in-shore—perhaps swamped in the surf—perhaps cast ashore, perhaps on the Eleusis beach, where Cleopatra was probably having her early morning swim amid bored guards and naked girls. It would be a marvel if Hero had sailed past Eleusis without being seen; an even greater marvel if she had escaped the guard-boats that plied off-shore. Between Eleusis and the city, slightly to the southward of the main road, close to the slums outside the city wall, were the gibbets—a little forest of them, plainly visible from sea. Hero would be hardly likely to get further than the gibbets, if she had been caught and recognized.

However, Tros turned seaward—northeast. It was not that he feared the guard-boats, or feared being recognized. The news of his flight would be known already; not improbably the queen had already heard the news by galloper. But to head seaward was good strategy and tactics. It was even possible the queen might have seen him from the beach and have jumped to the false conclusion that he had Hero aboard and was escaping toward Syria to drive a bargain with Cassius. If so, that would give Hero a better chance to escape, if she had not been caught already. But it also served to disguise Tros' real intention. And by gaining a wide offing far out of sight of land, he would be able, about night-fall, to change helm, hoist sail again and make for Pelusium with a quartering wind. There might be too much wind by evening, but even so, that would be better than too little.

Conops, on the wine-ship, had the easier task; a less littered and crowded deck, a lighter vessel; but both ships labored dangerously on the moderate sea; the oar-work was heart-breaking, even though there were plenty of men and they rowed in delays. Progress was agonizingly slow.

AT LAST Ahiram dared an attempt at a conference and found Tros communicative. He trusted Ahiram at sea and was thoughtful of the Phoenician's dignity; it was only on land that he classed him with all the other drunken sailors.

"And now what, Lord Captain? Come a blow, we drown. And come a Roman ship, we get pirates' dues. We've wa-

ter, I'd say, for three days, maybe food for a week, if we can find it and get it up out of the fold. We can't fight, and we can't run—"

"Not in these two crates, no. But Cassius, the Roman proconsul, has seized all the shipping of Sidon, Tyre, Joppa and Gaza. Those are good ships."

"Aye, Lord Captain, of their size there are none better—cedar of Lebanon, bronze, good flax cordage—"

"Cassius is planning to invade Egypt, Ahiram. He has a fleet in the harbor of Gaza. If I remember, there is seven fathom of water there."

"Aye—six-and-a-half, seven."

"But it is a small harbor, so it must be a small fleet."

"Aye, not many vessels."

"But likely good ones. Cassius has had his pick. He plans a very swift pounce on Egypt. He has called me a pirate. I will teach him what it means to call a free-born captain by a foul name."

"So we make for Gaza?"

"Not yet. Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt, also has called me a pirate. I have more than a hundred men near Pelusium, who are in peril of her vengeance."

"There is no room for them on these overloaded vessels," said Ahiram.

"Hero has gone to find those men."

"Aye, aye, you have a woman. I forgot her. I suppose we shall all have to die for the woman."

Tros turned on him suddenly, savagely, setting his jaw, scowling.

"You Phoenician ingrate! Dog of a shipwrecked pirate's helmsman, whom I saved from Romans and the oarbench! Show me a man of all my men who doesn't owe me his freedom! You wenching toss-pot! Grudge me, do you? Shall I leave good, gallant seamen to be hanged or worse, and leave my loyal lady at the mercy of Caesar's widow, to preserve you, you glutton, for debauch in dock-side taverns?"

"Oh, aye," Ahiram answered, "we're your freedmen, true enough. And you pay us. You're a man of your word, Lord Captain. I for one won't flinch. You lead well. But—but—"

"But what?"

"Hitherto we were venturers, with a stout ship and a safe harbor. Now we're pirates. No good ship. No harbor. If we're caught we'll be enslaved or crucified. And then, there's Sigurdsen. You'll fetch him and all his men from wherever they are, no matter what risk to us all, and if we fetch them out alive that leaves me second mate again, with that big battle-axing savage to order me hither and yon—"

"Ten times the seaman you are! Ten times your guts, Ahiram! He can outgrumble, out-drink, out-wench, outbrawl, out-swine you—aye, and then out-sail and out-battle ten of you! I can count on Sigurdsen. And by the Baltic nor'easter that blows in his lungs, he may count on me!"

"Oh, as for that, you can count on us all," said Ahiram. But Tros was in no mood to be flattered.

He was savage with himself on many counts, all contradictory, all challenging and stirring in him the very stuff that once had caused Caesar to offer him the command of all Rome's navies: the same stuff that had made him decline the offer—the stuff that had made him Caesar's enemy, and then Caesar's friend.

Self-critical because of his early Samothracian training, and taught from his youth to be mistrustful and even scornful of all women, he cursed himself for having fallen into Cleopatra's clutches; for having been her friend; for having trusted her. Paradoxically, he cursed himself for having left Hero to her own resources. Educated by his father, Perseus, initiate of the Mysteries and Prince of Samothrace, never to let love of woman come between him and duty, he had brought away his men and let the

woman take care of herself if she could, telling himself he trusted her as he expected her to trust him.

HE DID not trust her, as he knew he could trust Conops. He feared for her because he loved her. Having saved his men first, he intended to risk his own life and theirs, too, in an utterly desperate attempt to find her and snatch her from danger, that she might share with him even greater dangers!

She was a willful, audacious girl whom it delighted him to master—a beautiful, brave, reckless girl who had escaped from a throne, and very bravely escaped, to be free to love whom she pleased. Tros had no doubt whatever that she loved him. And he knew why. She loved the very quality that made him capable of taking her at her written word and leaving her to her own resources in the midst of danger, within reach of her sister's deadly hatred. He knew she loved being left to her own resources.

It was characteristic of him that he suddenly dismissed anxiety and went to work, with almost incredible attention to detail, making ready to seize by the throat the unpredictable and shake from that the freedom of the seas. First, last, always the sea was his element. As some men yearn for a home and luxury, he burned for the great adventure into unknown oceans. And he laughed with new zest. He imagined himself showing all those hard-won sights to Hero, wondering under what strange skies she was destined to bear him sons.

It stirred him. Almost impossible things began to happen. Rowing never ceased, except for the few moments when he signaled Conops to come alongside for instructions; then Conops, too, began making miracles. Sleep never ceased. Relays of men lay snoring amid a tumult of hammer-and-adze. Even Tros snatched four hours' sleep amid the legs of straining men who pulley-hauled the heavy arrow-engine fittings from the hold.

Work never ceased for an instant. They rigged a false bulwark, fitting it over the tholes while the oarsmen kept on swinging to the ceaseless drum-beat. They sewed long canvas curtains hung on iron rings, to protect the decks from arrow-fire, furled until needed. And when night fell, and Tros changed helm southward toward Pelusium, a steadily increasing north wind drove the wallowing hulls so fast that the new caulking, hurriedly done by torchlight in Esias' yard worked out in places from between the planking and they had to man the water-hoist.

Conops was easily able to keep station by the blue-white glare of the charcoal-forge on Tros' deck and by the sparks as the armorer's sledges struck new purpose upon old and broken gear. They made grapnels and repaired old chain to be spliced to the warps. They rigged derricks for dropping the grapnels to an enemy's deck. They set up arrow-engines and protected them with screens of wood covered with beaten iron. And all night they toiled in relays at the clumsy water-hoist.

Tros watched the stars. It was pitch-dark—no moon. Even he, past-master navigator, did not dare to try conclusions in the dark with the shoals off Nile-mouth. He knew them too well. It had been through those shoals, soon after Pompey's murder on the beach, that he had brought the girl Cleopatra away from her beggarly army of borrowed Arabs, and had taken her to Alexandria, to sneak into her palace and stand naked in Caesar's presence.

But that had been in daylight. Now he had to time his land-fall by dead reckoning, without water-clocks, with nothing to guide him but the stars, his intuition, the feel of the wind and that rare, sensed accuracy that distinguishes

the great sea-captain from lesser men who are merely competent and bold.

He made it. He heard the first cry of the sea-birds, as the rim of the golden sun uprose into the mauve of the eastern skyline. He heard the breakers, saw the gulls' wings, ordered the leadsman to the chains and signaled Conops, two or three hundred yards astern, to follow him closely.

"Down sail! Out oars! Stations!"

They were a proud crew who stood to arms, crowded, but each in his place and a decurion to each ten. They had come near rebuilding a ship in a day and a night. A poxy, evil-smelling barrel of a coastwise rats' refuge looked now like something to be reckoned with. Leaky she was. Slow and unhandy she was; deep-laden and down by the head. But they had even painted the false bulwark bright blue with Tyrian dye-stuff stolen from Esias' sheds. She was a bristling battle-engine, fit at least to engage and to grapple and spew forth men beneath a hail of arrows.

Neither Tros, nor a man, nor a ship's lad grinning beside his arrow-basket, cared what came of her, so be they saw some better ship that lacked room to run. There was nothing even theoretically wrong with piracy, from their viewpoint, not with a good lord captain on the quarter-deck and a whole world full of loot and wine and women.

And as the wine and roasted wheat came up for breakfast from the cook-stove in the after hold, the good news came down with a roar from aloft:

"Ship at anchor—ahead—in the channel! Two ships! Romans!"

CHAPTER IX

"Grapnels—Let Go!"

THE crew gorged wine and hot wheat in silence except for the gurgle and munch. Ahiram took the helm. Half-a-dozen oars on either side kept the ship in mid-channel. Tros went aloft, to con the situation with his own eyes. They were afire with desperate intelligence. Of only one thing he was absolutely sure: he could not put back to sea in those crowded and leaking ships. The first touch of an enemy's warbeak would send either of them to the bottom. They

would have served their last purpose when they brought their crews close to better ships, whose captains lacked guts, alertness or the gift for keeping what Tros needed. Pirate, was he? He would have the profit along with the name. Tros was taking all chances, that daybreak.

True. The masthead man was right. They were Romans anchored in the fairway. One was a Tyrian-built bireme, Roman manned, and beaked with iron. She looked reasonably fast—no catapults—no cumbrous mid-ship citadel—a clean-lined, lateen-rigged cruiser, recently built. No corvus. No dolphin. Ample deck-space. The other, smaller vessel was of the liburnian type, two-masted, without a ram, also a bireme, but built more lightly than the other. Both ships had narrow engines and were heavily manned by men in Roman armor. More ominous yet, on the deck of the larger bireme, the red war-cloaks of several lictors were unmistakable.

Lictors were the inseparable attendants of a Roman magistrate. A proconsul would have ten in his own territory, but he was forbidden by Roman law to take them with him on foreign soil. Tros could count six on deck, and there might be others below or behind the deckhouse cabin. It would be just like Cassius to move secretly; equally characteristic of him to refuse to dispense with a full complement of solemn living emblems of a proconsulship snatched by force of arms. But would Cassius dare to be in Pelusium with only two ships?

The Romans should have seen Tros' top-mast, but they were keeping no mast-head watch. They appeared to expect no attack from the sea. That was as typical of Roman arrogance, which they flattered themselves was confidence, as the presence of lictors.

It was a beast of a passage into Pelusium, blind with reeds and curving between sand-banks, narrow, with unmarked shoals and almost unnegotiable by a deeply-laden ship. But near Pelusium, where the great granite fortress overlooked the ford across the Nile, the passage widened, and beyond the ford there was quite an extensive harbor with bulkheads and narrow canals, in which numbers of Egyptian vessels were moored.

A huge scow-shaped ferry lay at the ford's western end; it was said to be able to carry a hundred camels. Nobody ever waded that ford if he could help it. It was low-Nile—not deep enough to let the Roman biremes pass to the pool beyond—probably just deep enough for shoal-draft Nile-boats—about shoulder deep to a man, and muddy. The centuries had seen more than one army perish trying to cross that ford. The fort parapets and bastions could sweep its full width with arrow-fire.

The Egyptian, western bank of the river was densely cultivated. So was a narrow, irregular margin on the eastern bank; but beyond that was desert. Just visible, filing across the desert from the eastward, along the summit of a dune, with the early sun silvering their lance-points, came eight hundred or a thousand Arab horsemen with a sprinkling of Roman cloaks and helmets.

Whose men? Was an army behind them? Rome's was an infantry genius; even Caesar had never developed an efficient cavalry; but cavalry were indispensable for swiftly terrorizing and suppressing newly-conquered provinces. So there was almost no doubt that the Arabs must be Cassius' irregulars, newly raised for the looting of Palestine, less expensive than Roman legions, superbly mounted and probably ably led by their own chiefs, held to the mark and critically bear-led by Roman centurions. There were also probably two or three Roman tribunes, wearing Arab costume; that was the usual system.

It looked as if Cassius' invasion had

already commenced, in a typical, secretive way—it could be called a raid by bandits or a diplomatic excursion should it happen to miscarry. There was a mysterious absence of warlike demonstration from the fort. The city, clustered around the fort, was as still as a jungle when beasts of prey are prowling. The sentinels on the parapet appeared to take no notice of Tros' ships, although from that height they could easily see them. At the Egyptian end of the ford, on high ground, barely beyond range of arrow-fire from the Roman biremes, was a small force of Egyptian cavalry—not more than a hundred men—perhaps fewer; the sun shone on their brass accoutrements, and they made a brave show, but they looked about as useful as painted statuary against the oncoming Arabs. It was just possible to distinguish the plumes of the horses' heads that proclaimed them a detachment of the queen's bodyguard. Was the queen secretly treating with Cassius?

AND now another puzzling detail. Half a mile to the northward, down the Nile, toward the ford, came ten rowboats, crowded with men in armor, and by an armed people who might be women. The boats were rather badly rowed by dark-skinned men, undoubtedly Egyptian peasants. In the bow of the leading boat, with his armor aflash in the rising sun, stood a giant—who might be Sigurdsen—who probably was Sigurdsen—too distant yet to be clearly recognized but—yes, Sigurdsen, the Viking, by his gestures!—Sigurdsen bringing the billeted men from the villages where Conops left them—bringing them straight into a trap, with Arab cavalry to his right, the fort on his left and Roman warships waiting for him with their anchors down near the bed of the ford.

Sigurdsen must have Hero with him. Who else could have summoned him down to the sea? But how swift she had been. And what a blazing, loyal, dunderheaded fool was Sigurdsen! Thoughtful of saving his men for battle-duty, he had brought Egyptians to man the oars, and then undone his forethought by rank stupidity! Was the man drunk?

"Stand to arms! Ahoy there—Conops!"

Tros returned to deck. He put on his armor and donned his purple cloak over it. The crew knew what that meant. They would be able to see that cloak and rally to him. His ten Jew freedmen formed in line and went down on one knee so as not to obstruct his view, but ready—ready for anything. The two ships came together perilously, stem to stern, and Conops leaped the taffrail with his golden trumpet in his left fist.

"Sound the rally! Sigurdsen is bringing our flotilla head-on into two Roman biremes. Probably he thinks they're ships we've taken!"

"Your lady must have found him mighty sudden, master! Where's her sail-boat?"

"Sound the rally!"

The trumpet-call startled a million birds from the reeds in the swamps on either bank. Perhaps Sigurdsen heard it, perhaps not. It was the best that could be done at the moment. Certainly the Romans heard it. Tubas began blaring on the biremes, around the bend, a quarter of a mile away. Tros beckoned Ahiram to overhear the orders he gave to Conops and thus save precious seconds.

"The biremes haven't room to turn. If they slip their cables they'll come toward us stern-first. I'll take the big one. You take the other, Conops. Open fire the moment you can see them. Go in fast and grapple! Lay aboard all hands and gut them before they can bring their archery to bear on Sigurdsen's boats!"

Conops leaped the taffrail, shouting orders to his crew. Tros wasted no more seconds.

"Cymbals! Both sides—full speed ahead!"

Tros to starboard, Ahiram to port, they conned the winding course, as the pulsing cymbal and drum-beat stirred the oarsmen. They whipped up a wake that boiled in the river reeds.

"Archers—ready!"

Off came paulins. Dry bow-strings. Arrow-engines squeaked taut. Ships' lads, alert and trembling with excitement, crouched by the baskets of arrows and had to be cuffed for getting too close with their ready reloads. Master-archers took sighting-shots at birds on the wing.

"Cymbals — Starboard easy! Full ahead, the port side! Faster! Faster! Now then—both sides, let her have it! Full speed! Archers—engage!"

AROUND a blind island of reeds, with every seam leaking to the strain of the oars, and only a hundred yards to go. The Romans were caught napping, disciplined but bewildered. They launched a hail of arrow-fire, but it was baffled by Tros' sail-cloth curtains that came clashing on their rings along the lines and protected his crowded crew. Tros' and Conops' arrow-engines—twelve arrows to each volley—made it impossible for the Romans to man their bulwarks.

"Grapnels—let go!"

Crash. The thunder of colliding hulls. A slithering volley of javelins from the Roman deck. The battle-roar: "Tros! Tros!" Polished steel and purple, Tros and his ten-Jew bodyguard were away in the lead of a steel-shod company that stormed the bireme's bulwarks like a blast of roaring flame.

"Tros! Tros!"

The unarmed lictors fled into the cabin. Perhaps because they represented Rome's dignity and majesty, or perhaps because of battle-madness, some one shut them in with an iron bar that passed through iron slots and was locked by a wedge that needed a key to extract it. The Roman sea-infantry stood to their arms and fought with the well drilled fatalism of the farm-born conscript. The arrow-engine fire had killed all but one of their officers—a young tribune; he leaped to the cabin roof and they rallied around him, too crowded to use their weapons to advantage. Again and again they locked shields and smashed their way toward Tros, who was javelin-proofed by the shields of his bodyguard. Those who did get near Tros died; his Jews were careful to give him sword-room. But he was hard-pressed.

A Roman centurion, rallying men in the bireme's bow, caught sight of Sigurdsen's flotilla. Sigurdsen was having trouble with his rowers; they were refusing duty and being thrown overboard. Men in armor were manning the oars, but Sigurdsen's cow-horn trumpet was blaring the news that he was hurrying to Tros' aid. The centurion hacked through the bireme's cable, hoping to drift to the eastern bank within reach of the Arab cavalry. Ahiram killed him, but the grappled ships began to drift seaward, until the leaky old tub that Tros had turned into a warship touched bottom. Conops' vessel and the other bireme, grappled together, a floating shambles, drifted down toward them, struck the sunken ship and hung there, all four vessels locked in one death-grip.

Romans climbed to their masthead and were shot down by Tros' archers. Tros crashed through the rallying Roman line and leaped to the cabin roof, where he slew the young tribune. Two of his bodyguard were down; four others were back-to-back in the midst of a mêlée; they lacked Conops to rag and bully-damn them; they had been wedged apart by the charging Romans; but the remaining four reached Tros.

He sent them leaping over Romans' heads to their comrades' rescue. He had time for one glimpse, then, of the whole field of battle.

Sigurdsen, in mid-ford, had been engaged by the Arab cavalry on horses that could barely touch bottom, disorganized, plunging, slaughtered by the flotilla's arrow-fire. Conops appeared to have the other bireme almost won; he was leading a charge along the deck and some of the Romans were leaping overboard. Ahiram, too, had done well; he had taken no prisoners; the forward deck was littered with dead and dying, hard to distinguish at a glance from the fettered oarsmen, slaves who lay under their seats and bleated, *"Servus! Servus! Parcete servo!"* probably almost all the Latin they knew. On the lower bench there was pandemonium; the rowers were trying to wrench their fetters loose; they had broken their oars in the oar-ports and were using the inboard ends for levers. On the western bank, the cohort of the queen's cavalry remained exactly where it had been. The fort was silent.

Tros leaped into the midst of the mêlèe on the after deck. He led a charge that swept the whole stern of the ship from mast to taffrail. The Romans were not good at surrendering. Those who didn't die where they stood, leaped overboard and were drowned by the weight of their armor. The few who did surrender were recruits from the conquered Syrian towns, whom Cassius had levied to replace the wastage of his legions from disease and guerrilla warfare.

THERE was no time yet to get the bireme under control, nor even to force the cabin door and see who was imprisoned in there. The cabin ports were fastened on the inside. Tros set sentries around the cabin. Then he leaped to the grounded ship and got the arrow-engines to bear on the Arab cavalry. He had to beat his master-archers to their posts; they were mad for the loot of the Roman ship. It was not until Conops leaped aboard and joined him, and Tros himself laid and fired one engine and Conops cranked it, that he was able to bring to bear the full terrific hail of his screaming arrow-blasts and clear the ford for the flotilla. The river was full of dead and drowning horses, dead and drowning men.

Then came Sigurdsen, storm-angry because he was late. Northmen, Cilician ex-pirates, Gauls and Spaniards clambered aboard behind him, and some women behind them, all clamoring for plunder. They began to strip dead Romans of their armor. They had to be flat-bladed by decurions before they were under control. Then Tros had time to demand news:

"Where is Hero?"

Sigurdsen stared. Conops, with the sweat of battle on him and the blood running down from a scalp-wound because nothing could make him wear his helmet out of sight of Tros, no matter what the odds against him, flared like something spilled in hot fat:

"You Baltic herring-eater, do you mean you've lost her?"

"I haven't seen her," said Sigurdsen, speaking to Tros. It was beneath his dignity to answer Conops. "Hero sent her slave on horseback. I have the hag with us. The horse was half-dead; it drowned when she swam the river. She said Hero was in hiding near Pelusium and we were to come in a hurry. I have a prisoner, but I can't understand him, nor he me."

Tros gave his orders to Conops:

"Clear away the grapnels but stay fast to the sunk ship, ready to let go. Set a sharp watch—keep an eye on the horsemen on both banks. Then count dead and wounded. Tell Ahiram to get the Roman rowers under control. He may tell 'em they'll be set free if they behave. Count Roman prisoners and put them

under guard on the stern of my bireme."

"Aye, aye, master."

It was already "my bireme." Tros returned to it. Sigurdsen followed. Tros wrenched at the iron bar on the cabin door. It wouldn't yield. Sigurdsen battle-axed the woodwork; three blows and the bar was loose enough for Tros to break it from the slots. Six of his bodyguard came and formed up behind him as he wrenched at the door. It opened outward. He expected a rush of armed men. Stale air came forth and a kind of solid silence. He could see the red cloaks of lictors lined against the forward bulkhead; but it was too dark to distinguish much else except a table down the midst and a number of men in a group, all standing.

"Open those ports!" Tros commanded.

Some one opened one port. He could see then. The cross-light fell full on Hero's face. She was gagged. She was being held by two men with her hands tied behind her. A third man, from behind, held the edge of a dagger so close to her throat that if she had moved it would have drawn blood.

"Do you recognize me, Tros? I am Alexis," said the man's voice. "You have while I count ten, to pledge your oath in the name of Samothrace, and Philae and the holy Mysteries, that you will let every one—you understand me? —every one in this cabin go free, unquestioned, unmolested, armed and unpursued. Otherwise, at the word of ten, I will cut this woman's throat."

THERE were plenty of men who had heard and who could see through the open door, but Tros could not make signals to them because Sigurdsen was in the way, peering over his shoulder. He knew Alexis too well to risk a sudden rush. Alexis would cut that graceful throat without hesitation, and very likely stab himself to death afterward. But there was an archer staring into the cabin through the open port. The man was a crack shot, but a dunderhead. He might or he might not dare to put an arrow through Alexis' ear without being told to do it. Hero's eyes were gallant, angry. Alexis began to count.

"One—two—three—fo—"

The word ended in a gasp. A dagger struck him from behind, in the neck. He fell backward. His own dagger dropped to the floor. The dagger that had killed him flicked out through the open port and clattered on the deck, where the archer pounced on it. Tros went into the cabin in three strides and the men who had been holding Hero flinched away. Some one's armor clanked as he sat down on a bench in a shadowy corner. With his dagger Tros cut the bandage from Hero's mouth, severed the cord that bound her wrists.

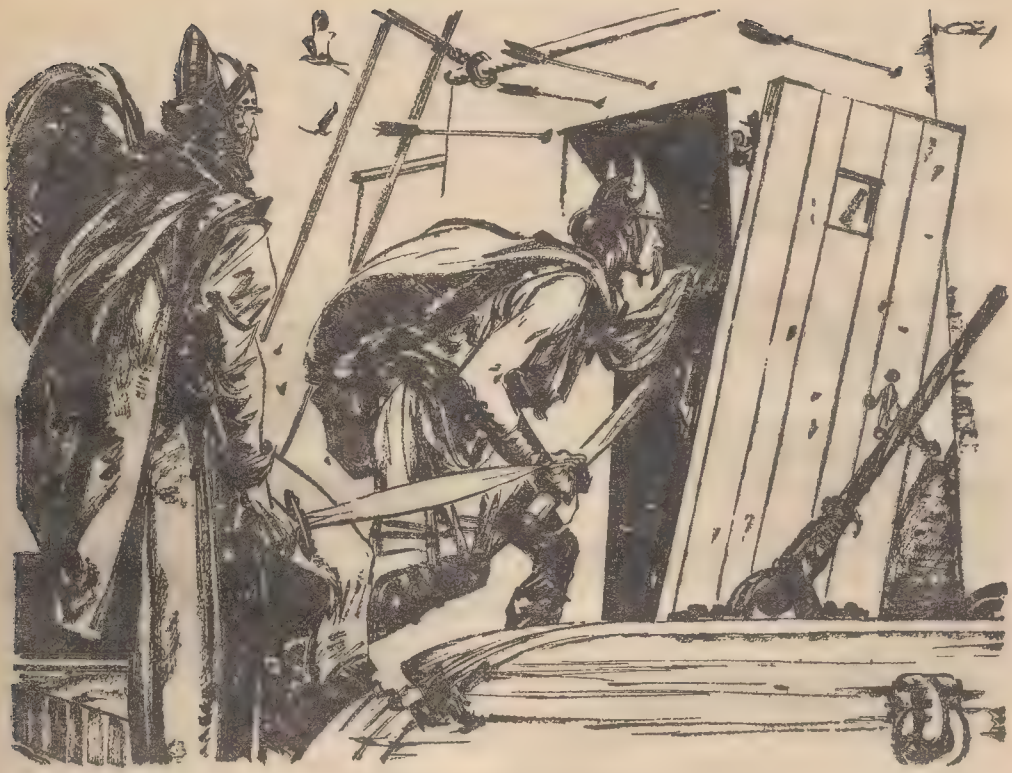
"Hurt?"

"No, not much. All well?"

"Aye."

He stared around him. "Open all ports!"

Sigurdsen opened them. From outside, battle-grimy faces crowded them for a view of the cabin. Sigurdsen's fist struck one face. Tros' bodyguard attended to the others, stumbling over shadowy legs as they hurried to deliver their punches through the ports. Then the decurions got busy on the deck and the low-roofed cabin filled with light. Tros stood chafing Hero's wrists as he counted prisoners and examined faces. Some were standing, some were seated behind the others, as if they expected no quarter and might as well show no courtesy. One man lay on a cot against the starboard bulkhead, with a scarlet cloak over his blanket and his head on a pillow in shadow. Including ten lictors, all those who were standing seemed unimportant. Tros stared at the seated men, one by one, and named them, changing the inflection of his voice to convey his opinion of each in turn.



"Pausanias! Retiring Commander of Pelusium! I regret, Pausanias, that we should meet thus."

Pausanias scowled, with his beard to his chest. He looked dignified and said nothing, but he leaned forward and laid his jeweled sword on the table.

Tros named three others, who were all Pausanias' subordinates. Beside them were two Romans whom he didn't know; he ignored them for the moment, but Sigurdsen took their swords and laid them on the table. Tros faced about, toward the port side.

"Herod! Exquisite Prince Herod! Trying to steal a kingdom?"

The ringleted, intelligent Idumaean smiled. Instead of laying his scimitar on the table with the others, he offered it to Tros, who touched the hilt before he let Sigurdsen take it. He neither trusted, admired nor respected Herod, but he couldn't help liking him. Herod was a graceful and resourceful rogue who had the wit to see life as a game. That wasn't Tros' idea of life, but it was better than the ravening envy of the wolves of the Tiber.

An even more surprising person sat beside Herod. He was looking comfortless but magnificent in the uniform of a captain of the queen's guard.

"Well, Leander, your advice to me to bet on Yellow lined your pocket. Have you finished laughing at me?"

Leander laid his sword on the table.

"Tros," he said, "you are the only man in this cabin who has a sense of honor." He glanced at the cot on the starboard side. The man on the cot was hardly visible because the lictors had moved, so that three stood between him and Tros.

A man in the shadowy, far port corner stood up. Blood from the dead Alexis' neck had splashed his tunic, but he looked very smart in a Roman tribune's uniform.

"Lars Tarquinius, the Etruscan! I

had it in mind to slay you on sight.

"You waste words. Do you think I didn't know that?" The Etruscan's insolence was perfect. He didn't even offer to toss his sword upon the table. "I have paid for my life, so spare your homilies!" He kicked the dead Alexis. "If it hadn't been for my dagger, you would be needing a new woman."

Hero interrupted, laughing. "I beg the dog's life, Lord Captain! If he weren't a treacherous snake, I might be in Cyprus yet. Forgive him for having betrayed me to a better fortune!"

"Take his sword," Tros commanded. Sigurdsen strode forward and took it.

AND now the choice morsel. Tros had saved it for the last. He had known from the first who lay so silent on the cot behind the lictor's cloaks. He knew perfectly how to stir the sour spleen of Caesar's murderer. The man who had ganged a group of malcontents to stab his benefactor for being too ambitious, and who now aped his victim's power-lust without that victim's skill, was likely to be touchy of Roman dignity.

"Throw out those lictors, Sigurdsen! Strip them. Throw their *fasces in the river, and set the lazy lackeys to scrubbing decks!"

Sigurdsen took two of them by the necks and hurled them toward the door, where they were seized by eager arms and dragged out. Their sacred fasces were pitched after them. He on the cot sat up suddenly.

"Tros, you vile pirate, you will pay with your life for this, if it takes all Rome's resources to bring you to book!"

Out went two more lictors. Sigurdsen compelled the others to carry out Alexis' corpse. He slammed the door behind them. Conops' face peered through a port on the starboard side.

"All shipshape, master. Ready now to cast off. Cavalry on both flanks doing nothing. Thirty-two men dead or dying. Thirty-seven wounded. Ahiram is hurt. I've ordered corn and wine for the fettered rowers; they're acting sensible; they're mostly Jewish prisoners o' war. Not counting rowers, nor the badly wounded that we've pitched overside, we've forty-one prisoners, three of 'em Romans and the others Gauls and Syrians in Roman armor. Along near the ford on the east bank there's a crowd o' Pelusiumites, men, women, children—all scared, doing nothing, curious. The women that Sigurdsen brought along are starting trouble. They want—"

"Clout them! Put them to work keeping the flies off our wounded."

"Aye, aye, master; but there's one here I can't manage short of killing her. She's bit me. She's a tough hag. A crack of a knife-butt only 'livens her. I've got her roped—"

"Let her in," said Hero.

"Tros," said the man on the cot; he pointed; his hand trembled with malarial ague, "there is only one possible way for you to save yourself from vengeance for this insult to the Roman people! You will be hounded, caught, crucified—"

Sigurdsen opened the door and slammed it again behind a bronze-bodied hag, who fell at Hero's feet and kissed them, blubbering a torrent of mixed Greek and some other language. Tros kicked her for silence, but it was not until Hero had stooped and dog-patted her that she swallowed her sobs and sat still. She was Esias' wedding gift—the slave that Hero had picked from a dozen or more.

Cassius sat upright, pale, his eyes alight with fever, thin-lipped, lean. He laid an elbow on his knee and pointed, about to speak. Tros spoke first:

"Gaius Cassius Longinus, in case your dignity is so offended that you find life

*A bundle of rods enclosing an axe borne by lictors as a symbol of power.

unendurable, you may have your choice of these swords. I would like to watch you kill yourself."

Cassius glared. He glanced self-consciously around the cabin and then leaned back against the bulkhead.

Herod laughed.

CHAPTER X

"And Now You, Cassius!"

CONOPS reported again: nothing stirring from the city, but a boat from the eastern bank containing two officers, one Roman and one Arab, with a palm branch, asking armistice and parley. Tros ordered them admitted, without their weapons. They came in and stood staring—a big Arab, smelly with horse-sweat, who stared at Herod, and a red-haired Roman who saluted Cassius with a splendid gesture and then eyed Tros with unqualified admiration and even envy.

"Half our force dead!" he remarked. "You father of arrows! I would like to catch you on land! Who are you?"

Sigurdsen gathered the surrendered swords and stood them in a corner. Tros laid his own sword across the end of the table furthest from the door. Sigurdsen laid his battle-axe beside it. Tros sat down facing the door, signing to Hero to be seated at his right hand, Sigurdsen on his left. Then he ordered his bodyguard outside and called to Conops to set a deck-watch, to prevent eavesdropping and to be ready to enter the cabin if summoned.

"Cassius," he said then, "you may take the seat opposite me."

Cassius sneered. "You pirate, you will listen to my remarks from where I choose. I am ill. I have been seasick. I have the ague—"

"And you have my leave to live," said Tros, "if you obey. Not otherwise. Assist him to the table, some one."

Tarquinius offered his arm. Cassius snarled.

"You vile traitor, don't dare to soil me with your touch! You serpent!"

He got to his feet unaided and went and sat down with his back to the door between two of his Roman officers, who whispered to him. Herod went and sat on the cot, where he could keep his liquid, laughing eyes on Hero. He spoke beautiful Greek:

"Tros, if promises are what you crave, my tongue can utter them in golden words, as good as any one's. But I advise you that Cassius' gold is more substantial. I have none. Cassius has plenty. As proconsul he has had opportunities, haven't you, Cassius?"

"You Jew!" snarled Cassius.

Herod's beautiful white teeth flashed in a malicious smile.

"I wish I were. The Jews call me a Roman, which I thank whatever gods there be I am not either. Tros, hadn't you better kill us all except me? Cut throats are messy but they don't recriminate."

"I would rather show you no discourtesy," Tros answered. "May I enjoy the favor of your silence?"

"Yes," said Herod. "There are going to be some curious evasions of the truth. I, too, would like to listen to them. I will save my equivocations until the pious Cassius has spent his."

But the key to the truth sat at Tros' right hand. He began with Hero, speaking to her as if she were one of his officers.

"By whose orders," he asked, "were you gagged, with your throat against Alexis' dagger?"

"Lars Tarquinius suggested it. Cassius ordered it."

Conops' voice, going his rounds: "All well, master."

"Tell your story," said Tros, and Hero began speaking in a voice that had found the middle of the note since Tros first spoke with her in Cyprus.

"Last night, about two hours after dark, we—that is I and my four slaves—were upset in the surf, not far from here. There was a village. I found a horse. I sent this slave, Taia, who is Egyptian and knows the district well, to find Sigurdsen and bring him. I planned to wait on the beach until daylight, and then to watch for your sail, for I knew you would come by sea. I waited close by where Pompey was murdered. My three slaves were trying to haul the upset boat on to the beach when some men came, who I thought in the dark were robbers. My slaves tried to protect me. They were slain and I was seized. Then I recognized Lars Tarquinius. He had a squad of sailors with him."

Tarquinius interrupted: "Yes. And if you had told me Tros was coming, I would have known what to do. I owed Tros a favor for his treatment of me in Cyprus. Tell him the truth: how did I treat you?"

"Impudently," said Hero. "I remember I called you a mangy jackal, which is less than the truth, and you marched me away to this ship, with my hands tied, and you and Cassius discussed me like a slave for sale. The only man who was polite to me was Herod."

Herod smiled: "Unscrupulous politeness at the feet of beauty! I am the only rogue in the cabin."

HERO continued: "From then, until you came, Lord Captain, I have been continually questioned, insulted and threatened with torture. I have told them nothing. The proconsul Cassius sent a messenger to the fort, and it was only about an hour before you arrived that Pausanias came, and then Leander. Cassius had to send his secretary, his ship's captain and his commander of the troops to the fort, as hostages for Pausanias. Pausanias wouldn't believe who I am, although he admitted I far more resemble Arsinoe's portrait than does the prisoner whom he holds in the dungeon. But Leander knew me. Pausanias and Leander quarreled, because Pausanias has refused to turn over the command of the fort to Leander, and Leander with a hundred men has had to stay outside the city. The proconsul Cassius was very angry. He accused Pausanias of having accepted a bribe to surrender the fort, and now of demanding more than twice as much money. Herod kept urging Cassius to pay."

"Such honesty as theirs inflamed my eagerness," said Herod.

Cassius glared at him. "Silence! Do you hear me?"

Hero continued: "The whole plot came out because Alexis objected I was overhearing too much. But Cassius said it didn't matter because I was to be killed in any event unless I would tell all I know. Herod said it would be a pity to kill me; he would rather have me than Cleopatra. Then Cassius complained that the Arab cavalry were late. Herod said that was probably because Cassius hadn't paid them what he promised. They snarled at each other—"

"Did I snarl?" asked Herod.

"Until it came out that the plan was to occupy Pelusium, unite with some of Cleopatra's mutinous regiments, march on Alexandria and marry Herod to Cleopatra, thus making him King of Egypt, and Egypt Cassius' ally."

"My cousin Cleopatra," said Herod, "is used to being married to a man who had at least one other wife."

"Shut up!" snapped Cassius. "What do you want, Tros? Are you Cleopatra's envoy? According to my latest information she has proscribed you."

Tros nodded to Hero to continue.

"They were all quarreling, except Leander, and except that Herod was making fun of them; he kept insisting he couldn't wait to take Cleopatra in his arms. Alexis kept on urging Cassius

to have me killed, for fear the story might get out that there is a false me on the throne of Cyprus, and another false me in the dungeon.

"I dared Cassius to be brave and kill me himself while my hands were tied. I said it would be much safer than murdering Caesar, who had a pen to defend himself with. It was then that Alexis gagged me with a towel. He pulled out his dagger and offered to cut my throat; he said he didn't mind doing it because Cleopatra would be so pleased and it would make it safe for him to return to Alexandria and be forgiven.

"Then you came, and your trumpet sounded, and there was a panic, and the lictors fled into the cabin, and Leander shut the door and held it, because he said it wasn't safe for Cassius to go on deck, and then some one fastened the door on the outside. Alexis was for killing me there and then, but Leander—"

"Leander," said Herod, "appreciates beautiful eyes. He behaved with romantic ferocity. I shall always be glad it wasn't Leander who slew Alexis. He would have slain me next for having looked at her."

Tros looked at Leander. Then he glanced at Hero. Hero nodded.

"Continue," said Tros.

"It was Lars Tarquinius who thought of the plan to hold a dagger at my throat. Cassius agreed and bade Alexis do it. That is all," said Hero.

"A very masterly skein of lies!" said Cassius. "I deny that this girl is who she says she is, and I deny each and every one of her statements."

"I have not once told you who I am," she retorted. "Tarquinius and Alexis told you. I say I am Hero. I am the great Lord Captain's—"

Cassius interrupted: "Concubine, eh? Well, Tros, you have her. Now what else do you want?"

"I will take what I want," Tros answered. "It was you who commanded Cleopatra to denounce me as a pirate. It was at your insistence that she burned my trireme."

Sigurdsen clutched his axe. "Burned our good ship? The hag said it. I disbelieved her. Lord Captain, let me slay him!"

Herod chuckled. Lars Tarquinius licked his lips.

"THE money," he said, "is in a chest beneath that cot, Lord Captain."

Tros looked straight at Pausanias:

"How much has Cassius paid you?"

Pausanias was silent.

"At any rate, you have not surrendered the fort?"

Pausanias, looking very uncomfortable and avoiding Cassius' eyes, stroked his black beard and answered:

"Tros, you and I have known each other well since Caesar's day. You know me to be loyal to the queen."

"Then you will obey her order to make over the command to Leander?"

"Has he his warrant?"

Leander flourished a parchment warrant, bearing the royal seal. He pushed it under Pausanias' nose. Pausanias made a show of reading it.

"Very well," he said sourly. "Why did you send me an insolent verbal message, instead of sending in the warrant for my proper information?"

"Because a warrant in the hand is worth two in your fire," said Leander. "Do I take over?"

"Yes."

"There is a woman prisoner in the dungeon," said Tros.

Leander nodded.

"After you have satisfied yourself that she is a slave belonging to this lady," he laid his hand on Hero's shoulder, "and that she was arrested by mistake, will you be good enough to send her out to this ship?"

"Certainly." Leander stood up. He saluted. He smiled.

"The queen told me," said Tros, "that she thought you not worth the amount of your debts. I differ. There is a chest under the cot. You make take it. Give half of the money to Sigurdsen, to be distributed to my crew."

Cassius snarled and struck the table with his fist:

"See here, Tros—"

Tros' hand touched the sword on the table and Cassius closed his thin lips, glaring.

"Yes," said Tros, "I don't doubt there are documents! You may have your sword, Leander. So may you, Pausanias."

Sigurdsen returned their swords.

"Cassius' officers," said Tros, "will go with you, Leander, to be held as additional hostages. Open the chest and give me all the documents it contains."

Cassius writhed, but there was nothing he could do. Leander dragged out a bronze chest. It was heavy. He stood waiting for the key. Tros laid a hand palm upward on the table and looked straight at Cassius.

"You want the key?" asked Cassius. "My secretary has it. He is in Pelusium. Have a care, Tros! This is—"

"Take the chest on deck and break it open!" Tros commanded. "Bring all documents to me. Send Conops."

Sigurdsen and Leander carried out the chest, Leander motioning to all Cassius' officers to precede him to the deck. Conops came in and saluted:

"Nothing moving, master. Cavalry on both banks dismounted and standing easy. The crowd at the ford is looting dead men's armor."

"Excepting this officer who came under flag of truce, and excepting the proconsul Cassius and Lars Tarquinius, you will send all the Roman officer prisoners to the fort with Captain Leander. Send them ashore in one of our flotilla boats and lay two arrow-engines to protect their landing."

"Aye, aye, master."

SOMEWHERE on the deck the bronze chest clamored beneath a seaman's hammer. Cassius set his teeth. Sigurdsen returned with a very neat docket of papers, which he laid on the table.

"There is a lot of money," he remarked.

"See that Leander gets only half of it. Keep the rest for the crew."

Sigurdsen went out again and shut the door. Tros, fingering the papers, stared at Pausanias.

"If I should send these to the queen," he said, "there might be one more head upon the gibbets by the eastern gate. What say you?"

"We have been friends, you and I," Pausanias answered.

Tros nodded. "I will put your friendship to a test, Pausanias. Go to the queen. Go swiftly. You may tell her that Pelusium is still hers. And say this:" he tapped the documents. "Memorize my words well. Say to her: 'Lord Captain Tros of Samothrace awaits a letter from her, in her own hand, thanking him for having saved Pelusium and conferring upon him the freedom of the port of Alexandria with her personal, solemn guarantee of immunity for himself, for his wife Hero, and for all his men.' You are to add: 'the Lord Captain Tros is impatient to know in whose interest he shall employ a fleet of warships that are presently his.'"

"Fleet?" asked Herod.

Tros ignored him. "If such a letter from the queen, Pausanias, is in my hands by daybreak, the day after tomorrow, she shall never see these documents nor know from me which of her commanders may have been in secret correspondence with Cassius. But if not, let her look to her throne; and look you to your head! You may go ashore with Leander. Ride swiftly, Pausanias, and may my friendship ride with you."

Pausanias hesitated.

"It is a difficult mission, Tros."

"So? Hint to a few ministers and generals that I hold their correspondence, and then see how swiftly they will hurry to the queen to plead your suit!"

Pausanias nodded. He saluted Tros. He bowed to Herod and to Hero. He even made a gesture to Tarquinius. Then he walked out, ignoring Cassius.

Cassius stared at Herod. "I would like to speak with Captain Tros alone!"

"You, Prince Herod?" Tros asked. "Shall I send you back to Idumaea with your Arabs?"

"In the names of their curious gods, no!" said Herod, looking startled, serious. "They would accuse me of having inveigled them into a profitless trap. I would prefer almost anything. I wish to go to Rome. Cassius and I don't like each other. I will stay here and watch you manage Cassius."

"You shall be a witness whether I kill him or not," Tros answered. He had no thought of ever trusting Herod, but he enjoyed his company, and he wished above all to make Cassius feel humiliated. He addressed the Arab chieftain and the red-haired Roman officer beside him:

"You may go. The proconsul has no use for you. If you are on the march eastward within an hour there shall be no pursuit from Pelusium."

He turned to Lars Tarquinius. "And now you, you viper. I have sailed all known seas. Never—north, south, east, or west have I known such a treacherous scavanger of shame as you are! Four times have I neglected the duty to slay you—on my trireme, in Cyprus, near Memphis, and again now! Stand up!"

Tarquinius stood, very soldierly. He jerked his head, businesslike, at Hero:

"But for me, she would be dead. I slew 'Alexis. You can't overlook that."

"Why did you throw your dagger through the port?"

"Well, to tell you the truth, I was afraid. I wasn't sure I hadn't made a mistake. I had to think quickly. I wasn't sure Cassius hadn't a surprise up his sleeve, he lay so quiet. If the cat had jumped the wrong way, I intended to accuse Herod of having killed him."

"Why flatter me?" asked Herod.

"I have never pretended to you, Captain Tros, to be anything else than a needy fellow looking for a profit. Why don't you employ me?"

"If I ever catch you," said Cassius, "you shall die on a tree, you scoundrel."

"I will employ you," said Tros, "at your own trade. Fall away. Report to Conops."

"To that one-eyed miscreant?"

"Yes—or else swim for the shore. Take your choice. Fall away."

HEROD punched Cassius' pillow and adjusted it so that he could lean in comfort.

"And now you, Cassius!"

"Look here, Tros, it is true you have me at a disadvantage. But you have been proscribed as a pirate, and you know you can't last long at that trade. You could hold me for ransom. You would be paid, no matter what you demand. But remember: pirates once held Caesar for ransom, when he was no more popular in Rome than I am. He raised the money. But what happened to the pirates later? Crucified!"

"You compare yourself to Caesar?" Tros asked.

"Caesar in those days was unimportant," said Cassius. "I am proconsul of Syria. Convey me to Gaza, set me ashore, and I will forgive this outrage—these insults—this piracy. I will name you the ally of Rome and—"

Tros laughed. "Cassius, I saw you kill Caesar, your benefactor, to whom you had sworn allegiance. I was in Rome. I say I saw you do it. Caesar had forgiven you for having been his enemy."

"Were you not his enemy?" Cassius retorted.

"Aye. And I fought him openly. When I became his friend, I stood by

him. You became his friend, and slew him. You are a coward. I will make no bargain with you."

"What then?"

"You have a fleet in Gaza, ready to invade Egypt if this filibuster had succeeded. How many ships?"

"Eleven biremes."

"Manned?"

"Yes."

"You have heard my message to the queen of Egypt. While I await her answer, you will stay on this ship, hidden and well guarded. My crew will unload the sunken ship on to some other vessel. Should there be a Roman vessel in the harbor, I will take that for the purpose.

"The day after tomorrow, one hour after daybreak, we will weigh for Gaza, taking with us two or three of your officers, whom you will send ashore with your written orders to the captains of those eleven biremes to abandon ship. I will put my own crews aboard. When the fleet is at sea under my command, I will set you ashore in Gaza.

"Should the letter that I expect from the queen have arrived, you may have these documents. But if there is any trickery—any treachery, Cassius—I will not only take those ships, but I will take you to sea and hand you over to a bleating fleet of thirty rotten ships that are loaded with Romans whom you summoned from Alexandria! By that time, they will be ready to love you, I don't doubt! That is all, Cassius. If you would prefer to kill yourself, I will lend you a weapon. Otherwise, you may have your choice of cabins, except this one."

Cassius stood up, livid with anger.

"As you will," he answered. "But I warn you! Rome will not rest until this outrage has been avenged."

Tros buckled on his sword. He shouted:

"Conops!"

"Coming, master!"

"Find the proconsul a cabin and set him a guard. He may have one of his personal slaves in attendance, if you can find one alive. If not, give him one of the lictors."

"Aye, aye, master."

Cassius followed Conops. Herod stood up, crafty looking in his Idumaean head-dress, but cavalierly at ease. His eyes laughed into Hero's and glanced at Tros:

"I, too," he said, "am capable of madness—be she only lovely!" He turned in the cabin doorway. "Tros, may I visit Pelusium? I may find something fit to eat and drink. May I use your rowboat? May I have an escort?"

Tros gave the order to Sigurdsen. Then he took hold of the hag by the neck and pitched her out. He slammed the cabin and bolted it.

"Hero!"

"Tros! Lord Captain! Lover!"

ROAD RUNNER

By Henry Herbert Knibbs

FOR reasons best known to themselves, although not incomprehensible to certain peace officers of the district, Steve Purcell and Young Hardesty were riding an old Apache trail in the Dragoon Mountains.

No one, on pleasure bent, ever tackled the Dragoon Mountains in July. Tumbled rock, splintered pinnacles, and sand-eroded, grotesque rock statues radiated heat, evaporated the July rains, and furnished no apparent excuse for being, save as a shelter for rattlesnakes, rabbits, lizards and an occasional road runner. At the base of the range lay a wind-blown desert of sand, studded with abrupt, volcanic outcrops.

The sun hammered hard on the narrow, ever-winding trail. The horses plodded with heads lowered, sweat drying on flank and shoulder in dirty streaks and patches. Swarthy as an Apache, slender, tough-sinewed and tireless, Young Hardesty took the heat and monotony as a matter of course. Although not unacquainted with hardship, his partner was of a different fiber. Monotony especially irked him. Having reached the rock-walled pass dividing the crest, they were heading down the eastern slope when a flicker of brown crossed the trail, half running, half flying. Purcell drew his gun. Young Hardesty's hand flashed up, jogging his companion's arm. Muffled by space, the sound of the shot died swiftly. A splotch

of silver showed on a slanting slab of granite. Unharmed, the bird disappeared, shuttling among the rocks.

"Just between ourselves—" Purcell gestured round the shimmering emptiness—"what's the idea?"

"Don't you ever shoot one of those birds. There wouldn't be enough left to eat. Besides, I like 'em."

"Is that all?" Purcell slipped a fresh shell into the gun and holstered it.

"No, it ain't."

Purcell pursed his lips and nodded. From any one else, he would hardly have accepted such a rebuke. But he merely smiled to himself and rode on. His partner never did anything without a reason—usually a good one. A slow half hour of winding trail, of scorching barricade and blinding refraction of white light, and Purcell, whose horse had stopped abruptly, gestured to a coil of brownish gold in the shade of a half-dead cactus. "Any objections?"

"Nope." Grinning, Young Hardesty fired just a shade before his partner. The desert rattler writhed, its golden brown coil shot through and through.

"Is that all?" Purcell's tone was slightly sarcastic.

"No, it ain't."

Three hours later they reached the desert level. Sliding down behind the range, the sun threw long purple shadows of cactus and outcrop across the darkening sand. Another monotonous hour passed before they reached *palo verdes* and water. Though rimmed with bitter white, the water hole was like hearth and home. The weary horses drank and rolled. Staked out for the night, they nipped at the scant vegetation. Over a tiny fire of chaparral roots, Purcell made coffee and fried bacon. The meal was necessarily brief.

"It isn't so far from here," declared Young Hardesty as they stretched out, their heads on their saddles.

Purcell curled a cigarette. "What isn't? Hell?"

Young Hardesty grinned. "Heat kind of got you today."

"It would get anything but a rattlesnake or an Apache. If there's anything to grin at, lift the curtain."

"Up she goes." Yet Young Hardesty sat several minutes staring out into the evening desert before he also rolled a smoke and settled himself. "The last Apache break was in about '88 or '89, wasn't it?"

"I wasn't there."

" 'Course you weren't. Took guts to go through those days."

"Go on. Use a shovel. A trowel is too delicate for your hand."

"Well, anyhow," continued Young Hardesty, "the Apache Kid was runnin' loose long after Geronimo and old Natchez quit. Seems there was more than one Apache Kid. Seems like the settlers always called any young buck that took to the warpath alone, the Apache Kid. The one I mean was named Cut-le. His old granddaddy was one of Geronimo's warriors."

Purcell's ears perked up. "Yes, I remember. Young Cut-le stole Gene Rhodes' coffee mill when Gene was running stock up above Tularosa."

"Mebby. But Cut-le wasn't packin' any coffee mill when I met up with him."

Purcell blew smoke through his nose. "Lay it on as thick as you like."

"Sometimes," Young Hardesty glanced at his partner, "when you git to spoutin', you talk about history repeatin' itself. Well, if you'd been the Apache Kid, today, instead of a no-account card man gone wrong, what with that road runner and the rattler, it would have been almost the same as when I crossed the Dragoons, back about ten years ago. Almost, but not quite. I was just a kid. I crossed alone. Tonto Charley was camped over near old Fort Bowie. He sent word for me to meet him here.

"How did you like traveling with the Apache Kid?"

"I didn't meet up with him till I was pretty well down this side of the range. He was ridin' alone." Young Hardesty paused to roll another cigarette. "When I started across the range to meet Tonto Charley I was ridin' an old crow-bait of a horse. If I hadn't been mighty light weight we'd never made it as far as we did. I had an old canteen, some jerky, some matches and a couple of dollars. I was ridin' a busted army saddle and was packin' one of them sawed-off Springfield .45's, like the Apaches used before they got high-toned and took to Winchesters. Folks on the west side of the range told me I'd never make it. But I'd been rattlin' around Texas and Arizona for thirteen years, mebby fourteen, and I was feelin' mighty big and important.

"NOW nobody in that section knew the Apache Kid was runnin' loose. Took a pretty good man to keep track of him, any time. He'd be prowlin' around Tularosa and the White Sands country in New Mexico, and next you'd hear of him butcherin' somebody down along the Gila. State lines didn't mean a thing to him. It was all just country where he could steal horses, or rob somebody's shack of grub, or bump off somebody else that got in his way. Killin' was just as natural to him as breathin'—and doggone if I don't think he liked it better. Anyhow, I was just a kid, mighty near as black as an Apache, and my hair was so long I tied it up with a bandanna, like an Indian. Aside from wearin' overalls and boots, instead of moccasins and a gee string, I was about as much Indian as any white kid could be."

Purcell smiled. "I've noticed that, also."

"You're kind of a noticin' hombre, ain't you? How about takin' a look at that centipede that's tryin' to bed down in your boot?"

Purcell flipped the centipede to the sand and obliterated it with a stamp of his boot heel.

Young Hardesty gestured toward the distant Dragoons. "I had just hit this side of the range and was settin' my old crow bait, waitin' for him to get his wind. The noon sun was makin' the rocks wiggle like somethin' was crawlin' over them. I wasn't thinkin' of Indians, or white folks, or anything except the heat burnin' my knees and slappin' me in the face, when off among the rocks up the hillside, a rifle boomed.

"My old horse didn't even jump. He just doubled up under me and laid down without a kick. The slug took him through the shoulder, rangin' back. It must have blown his lungs and heart to pieces. Somehow, I wasn't scared, right then. I kept lookin' down the slope, wonderin' who was gunnin' for me, and I was so dam' mad I didn't think to get behind a rock and do my watchin' from there. I thought I saw a kind of thin web of smoke hangin' over a boulder, 'way off to the right. Mebby I did. But in that heat a fella could imagine anything."

"Afoot, and nobody around to bother you," commented Purcell.

"That was the trouble. If I could have seen somethin' to shoot at—but that old hillside was like a graveyard, just slabs and monuments and nobody home.

"I stripped the saddle from my horse. He laid stretched out, his head downhill. I reckon it was the first real rest he ever got in his life. Already a couple of buzzards were cuttin' the blue, swingin' and circlin' lower and lower. Now that shot had come from off to one side and below me. It seemed just like somebody sayin', 'You've gone far enough. It's time to turn back.' And if I'd had sense enough to open my mouth when I wanted to spit, I'd have called it a day. But I was mad. It wasn't until I cooled off and commenced to figure, that I got

scared. When I got scared I got mad again because I was scared.

"Mebby you noticed that a man afoot wouldn't be so easy to see, account of the rocks on both sides of the trail down this side of the hill? Settin' a horse, he would be above most of 'em and show up plain. Anyhow, I cached the saddle alongside the trail; takin' the sawed-off Springfield, I started down, watchin' every turn and keepin' my eye on the slope below. Tonto Charley had said he'd be at the water hole Friday or Saturday. It was the long side of noon Saturday and I wanted to make the water hole by evenin'.

"It was tough goin'. Stompin' down the trail wasn't so awful bad; but the heat dancin' on the rocks made everything look queer, so that I kept thinkin' I was seein' shapes crouchin' behind boulders and creepin' from one shadow to another. Even then I wasn't thinkin' of Apaches. Apaches hadn't been botherin' white folks much for quite a spell. Naturally, I figured that the fella that dropped my horse could have dropped me just as easy. Why didn't he? Who was gunnin' for me, anyhow? Bein' a kid, it never come to me I might have been mistook for somebody else.

"It was awful still. The buzzards were circlin' lower and lower. Alongside the trail a lizard sat on a rock, pumpin' up and down like he was out of breath. Even a lizard looked kind of friendly. It was alive, and I could see it and I knowed what it was. There was somethin' alive, somethin' I *couldn't* see, down among those rocks. It was awful still, and it looked awful far to the water hole. I was makin' as good time as if I was on the horse. But afoot I felt like I was shrinkin' up—gettin' smaller and smaller, till I wasn't bigger than an ant crawlin' over the sand, and gettin' nowhere."

Purcell, gazing up at the stars, turned his head. "I can see you, working down the trail like a cat in the grass, pop-eyed, and the old Springfield in both hands, ready for business."

Young Hardesty nodded. "But not quite ready enough. What with watchin' all around, and thinkin', and worryin' that I wouldn't make it to the water hole before evenin', I stepped round a bend, where the rocks stood mebby twenty feet high on each side. There, settin' his pony—I recollect it was a paint horse with only half of one ear left—was a young Apache. He sat lookin' at me over the muzzle of a sawed-off Springfield, just like the one I was packin'.

"I DIDN'T have a chance. A crook of his finger would have blowed me off of my feet. Across his calico shirt was a second belt of cartridges. He wore white cotton drawers and those long moccasins like boots, with the little round toe protectors, like the Apaches always wear. It didn't come to me right then that, aside from our rigs, most anybody could have mistook me for him. But I'd seen his picture in the newspaper. It was the Apache Kid.

"What with him packin' extra ammunition, a water bottle, and a rawhide sack of grub, I didn't need any newspaper to tell me he was on the warpath. His black eyes was like beads. You couldn't see anything back of 'em. It was just as if he used 'em to see through, but didn't aim to let anybody see into 'em. It was only a second or two he sat lookin' at me, but it seemed like a long while. Then he put up his hand—made the peace sign.

"'Did you shoot my horse?' I asked him in Mexican.

"The Kid could talk Mexican, all right. He told me he shot my horse. It didn't seem to bother him none.

"'Why?" I asked him.

"He laughed with his mouth, but those bead eyes didn't laugh any. 'You

are not Nanay. I thought you were Nanay.'

"Then he asked me where I was headed for. I told him I was headed for the water hole, yonder, to meet a bunch of my friends. He asked me how many. Thinkin' to throw a scare into him, mebby, I told him six of Curley's gang. How in hell that Indian knew it was only Tonto Charley I was to meet, I dunno. But he said, 'I think it is only one.'

"Slippin' off his horse, but givin' me no chance to get a shot at him, he walked up; stickin' the muzzle of the sawed-off against my chest, he said, 'I'll take that gun.' Now I didn't like the idea of givin' up my gun. It was just about all I had left, except my canteen. But there was nothing to do but hand it over. Then he took my canteen. Steppin' back to his horse, but always keepin' his eye on me, he slung the canteen and my sawed-off on his saddle. All the time I was noticin' what small hands he had, and how easy he used 'em. Looked like he was awful handy with a gun, or a knife.

"Slippin' into the saddle, he pointed down the trail. He was tellin' me to go. I figured that he would shoot me in the back, just to see me wiggle; but I had to step on past him and start down the trail. My back was sure cold. I could feel just where the slug would take me—a kind of itchin' and crawlin' between my shoulders.

"I could hear his pony patterin' along behind me. Pretty soon he told me to stop. He rode up and motioned for me to hand him my tobacco and papers. Honest, that made me madder than all the rest of it. 'Mebby,' I said to him, 'you'd like my shirt and pants and the boots.'

" 'If I want, I get,' he said.

"That didn't sound awful good to me. Livin' in the Apache country some, I knew how bucks like the Kid often took a fancy to string a fella along, make him think everything was all right; then turn on him and slit his throat, or strip him and peg him out over an ant hill, where he would get et up an inch at a time. It was hot, but I was close to shiverin' when we hit the bottom of the grade. Ahead stretched the sand, the outcrops and cactus. And way off yonder, like a blue haze, I could see the *palo verdes,* where Tonto Charley was waitin' for me."

Purcell sat up and made a cigarette. "The *palo verdes* and the water hole. That's right here. And right here we are."

Young Hardesty grinned. "Yes. But sometimes it seems like a hundred years ago that I first set out to get here. Most of that hundred years was when I was doggin' down the trail ahead of the Kid. He was right close behind me. I never heard a sound, but I felt the loop of his rope over my head. Then it come to me quick that he was goin' to beef me, and I wouldn't meet Tonto, like I sent word I would.

The Kid wasn't mad. He was grinnin' most of the time. He didn't have nothin' against me. I was only about fourteen and he was a growed man. But he wanted a little excitement. I reckon he would figure it playin' a game. First, he made me strip off my boots and overalls and shirt. My hat he took and put on himself. And he sure looked tough. 'You no Apache,' he said, grinnin' like a Gila monster. I told him hell, no! I was white, and a dam' sight better man than he was. You see I figured it was all up with me, so I thought mebby if I made him mad he wouldn't torture me, but bump me off quick.

"When it come to tyin' my hands and feet, I give him a battle. But shucks! He was as stout as a horse, and just like he'd been oiled. While we were battlin' he was grinnin' right in my face. He was enjoyin' himself. When he got me tied, I was winded. I lay lookin' up at the sky, watchin' the clouds driftin' slow.

The sun was movin' down behind the range, so I didn't feel the heat so much. Pretty soon he steps up on his pony and heads back up the slope, leavin' me stripped naked on the sand, tied hand and foot.

"I got to thinkin' that mebby that was all there was to it: that he would leave me there where I couldn't get to water—and about noon next day the sun would get busy, and I'd be finished, or crazy. I commenced to think of how mebby I could crawl to some outcrop and saw the buckskin off my wrists against a sharp rock. If I could get my hands loose I could get my feet loose. Then I could head for the *palo verdes*. Travelin' at night, even naked, wouldn't be so bad.

"Just about the time I started to roll toward the nearest outcrop I heard his pony comin'. Then I knew he wasn't through with me. He rode up and stepped off his pony. In his hand was what I called his grub sack. He held it close to my face. I could see the sides of the sack move and I heard a kind of rustle, like something squirmin' around. Then all that happened before was like heaven. He had a rattler in that sack. 'How you like?' he said. I told him to go to hell.

"HE had cut five stout pegs. I counted 'em when he threw 'em down beside me. He took a stone and drives one peg. Then he loosed my feet and drew one foot up to the peg and tied it. When he got through he had me staked out like a bat on a barn door. He put me face down and shoved a little chunk of stone under my chin, so I had to see what was comin'.

"By that time I had quit hopin'. I knowed what he was goin' to do. Every once in a while he would look up at the clouds and grin. It was gettin' ready for a rain, one of them summer storms that comes quick and goes the same way. And he needed the rain to work out his plan."

Purcell, who had been sitting up, shivered.

Young Hardesty went on. "Takin' the fifth stake, he drove it in the sand, about six feet beyond my face. Then he opened the mouth of the sack, mighty careful. When the rattler's head slid out, the Kid grabbed him back of the jaws. Tyin' a thong of buckskin to the rattler, he fastened the end of the thong to the far stake. I reckon the Kid had had some practise at this kind of game, for when he got through, the rattler could make it to within about an inch of my face. At first the snake—he was one of those thick, brown mountain rattlers, mebby three feet long—slid around the sand, crawlin' in every direction tryin' to get loose. When he would come up short, it made him mad. All the time the kid was squattin' on his heels, grinnin'. He was havin' a good time. Every once in a while the rattler would sweep round and strike at my face. I was so far beyond bein' scared I was sick. What I mean, sick to my stomach.

"Now the snake could have kept crawlin' round and strikin' at me all night, without doin' any damage, so long as it didn't rain. But when it rained the buckskin thong would get wet and stretch. And all the rattler needed to get to me was about an inch. I been bit on the leg by a rattler, and come out of it all right. But nobody who has ever been bit in the head or face ever had a chance. And mebby you think the Apaches don't know that.

"I never recollected when the Apache Kid left. All I know is that it come to me, sudden, that he was gone. I could hear the rattler swishin' on the sand, wigglin' and tryin' to get loose. I kept my eyes shut all I could. But sometimes they would come open, just like I didn't have anything to do with it. And there would be the snake, mebby close to me, or off at the other edge of the circle,

crazy mad, and always movin'. I got over bein' sick. I commenced to feel like I was freezin' to death. My eyes were shut and I was prayin' that somethin' would happen quick, when I heard the swishin' stop. I looked. There was a road runner, his tail cocked up, kind of dancin' round the rattler, just out of reach."

Purcell leaned forward, his gaze on the figure of his companion. Yet it was at another Young Hardesty he was looking, a dark, slender body, naked, pegged out on the sand, eyes fixed on a brownish gold snake that writhed and drew back to strike at the quick, slim road runner. He could almost feel himself in Young Hardesty's place. He could also feel the hope that must have flickered in Young Hardesty's brain—a vague hope against indeterminable odds. Would the road runner give battle to its ancient enemy, or would the sprighty chaparral cock become frightened at the proximity of the figure staked out on the sand, and dart away into the evening haze drawing down over the desert?

"I had heard that road runners hate rattlers and have a way of fixing 'em. But I had never seen it done, and I didn't believe it. This time, though—" Young Hardesty broke off abruptly. "I reckon those road runners do it account of snakes eatin' their eggs. Some snakes will climb a right high bush to get at a bird's nest. As you know, a road runner is a mighty scary bird. Some birds will get scared and circle round a tree and then light in it again. But a road runner does most of his travelin' afoot. When he leaves he don't come back.

"Knowin' that, I laid still, like I was dead. But it seems the road runner was too busy takin' care of the rattler to pay any attention to me. And if you think that rattler didn't know what was comin', you get another guess. He commenced to thrash round, so mad he even strikes at the peg he is tied to. All the time I was thinkin' that just one of those strikes would finish me. My hands and feet tied down, and only able to wiggle my head a little, I would have to lay there and take it. I could see little green drops tricklin' down the peg after the rattler struck.

"All this time the road runner was hoppin' 'round, perkin' his head like he was figurin' out when to make a dash and peck the rattler in the neck. But road runners don't do it that way. All of a sudden he turns and lights out like a streak. I thought he had quit for good. Well, that was the end of that. Mebby he had seen my eyes blink, and got scared. I was so busy watchin' him and the snake that I hadn't noticed it was gettin' darker, and I didn't notice it was commencin' to rain till one of those big, scatterin' drops hit my back. It was like a bullet.

"Now birds don't like bein' out in the rain, any more than humans. The road runner was gone. If it turned in and rained just one good let-down the buckskin thong holdin' the rattler would get wet and stretch. Leave it to an Apache to figure out a scheme like that. With the rattler crawlin' round and pullin' to get loose, the thong would get just a little longer—and it only lacked about an inch for him to get in his work on me.

"I had been hopin' and givin' up so frequent that I quit feelin' anything. I was just kind of cold curious to see what would happen next."

Purcell nodded. "I can understand. Your feelings were about used up, but your brain went on reporting, like a camera."

YOUNG Hardesty nodded. "It was like a dream when the road runner came skippin' back, close to the ground. I just lay and stared. What was he goin' to do now? But you've seen it, so you know. He dropped a knuckle of cholla cactus as near the rattler as he dared,

then off skips the road runner again. Pretty soon he comes back with another joint of cactus. Honest, I was so interested watchin' him build his little corral that I forgot I was pegged out.

"That rattler went loco. He swished round, strikin' and drawin' back, floppin' so hard when he comes up short, account of bein' tied, that his belly showed. All the time the road runner was lopin' off and fetchin' back little knuckles of cholla. And he was a mighty neat workman, startin' to lay those cactus joints up in a wall to go plumb round the rattler.

"I wished then that the Kid hadn't propped up my chin. I could see too well. It was rainin' enough now so that right in front of my eyes the rattler's thong was beginnin' to swell."

Young Hardesty drew a long breath. His companion made some remark, but Young Hardesty did not hear it. He was living over again the horror and suffering of that dread experience. Even now he could feel the long-ago rain beating on his naked back, dripping chill from his forehead into his eyes, shutting out the foothills, narrowing his vision down to the scurrying bird, to the blurred shape moving in the circle of cactus, to the swelling buckskin.

"By the time he finished, the rain was comin' down right smart. The rattler was penned in and couldn't get to me."

Still the youth could not get entirely free of his memory. The road runner had gone. It had spread its wings, following a long run, had sailed off close to the sand. Young Hardesty recalled that strange sudden feeling of loneliness. Flash after flash of lightning followed the departure of the road runner. Water lay in dull silver pools in the shallow sand hollows. All unaware of what he was doing, Young Hardesty rubbed his wrists when he again spoke.

"If that rattler had been loose, I reckon he would have kept free of those cactus joints; for he knew if he once got spiked good, he would never get free of 'em. Loose, he would have kept crawlin' round and round, till he got so mad because he couldn't get out, he would naturally turn and bite himself—commit suicide.

"But he was tied, and that made him mad enough, without any cactus ringin' him in. The buckskin thong commenced to stretch plenty. The rain was beatin' in my face and I couldn't see any too clear. But I could see the rattler raise about a foot of his length off the ground and make a lunge at the cactus. He hit it hard. Some of those barbed joints stuck to him. Then he commenced to squirm. Every time he moved he whipped into more of those cactus joints. Pretty soon he was just a ball of cactus, movin' slower and slower."

Purcell shrugged. There was something ghastly about that moving ball of cactus joints in the dusk and downpour. Yet apparently Young Hardesty did not feel that way about it. His tone became almost brusque. "The rattler was all done. He couldn't get to me. But it took me a long time to believe it. A long time. Pretty soon the storm blew over the hill and the stars came out. I was shiverin'; likewise I was burnin' up for a drink of water. But it wasn't water I craved most, nor to get loose. I wanted to roll a cigarette and pull the smoke down inside of me till I couldn't feel anything. It had quit rainin'. I could feel my face wet, though. I was cryin' like a kid. But it seemed as if somebody else was cryin' and I was layin' there watchin' them."

"You were about fourteen years old—and you had been through hell. I've seen a man of forty cry like a baby after a great nervous strain."

"PRETTY soon," said Young Hardesty, "I commenced to ache all over. I was staked out and stiff. I reckon I had been achin' for some time, but I hadn't noticed it till then. I don't know whether my

light went out for a spell, or whether I went to sleep. I recollect openin' my eyes in the moonlight, at first not knowin' where I was. I tried to get up. Then it all came back. Yonder was what was left of the little ring of cactus fingers, and inside of it was layin' a ball of cactus. It wasn't movin'.

"I figured it was about three in the mornin'. Pretty soon it would be daylight. Staked out like I was, I knew what the sun would do to me. But I wanted to see the sun come up over the ridge. First would come a streak of gray, then pink, then it would spread and shoot up to the sky. And pretty soon the sun would come boomin' up, big and hot and all ready for business. I wondered how long I could stand it.

"I got to thinkin' of the Apache Kid. Would he come back to see what kind of a job he had made of it—or would he light a shuck for some other part of the country, where he could work some more devilment? While I was thinkin', it came just like a clock tickin' slow—the sound of a horse walkin' steady. Close to the ground like that, I could feel it. Then pretty soon I could hear it. Sometimes it would fade away, like when a horse steps from the hard level into the soft sand of a hollow. But each time it would come back louder. That was it. The Apache Kid was comin' to get one more grin out of it before he quit that end of the country. It came to me—what kind of a play would he make when he found out that his little game was spoiled?

"I wasn't so awful scared. I guess I had used up all the scare in me. The sound of that pony's hoofs commenced to get clearer and clearer. I could hear the creak of the saddle. I said to myself that I would just let on I was dead. Mebby the Apache Kid would take a look and ride on. But I knew all the time that no Apache could be fooled like that. Then the pony snorted like he had smelled the rattler. I couldn't see, because the Kid's pony was comin' up from behind. But out yonder I could see the mornin' fightin' its way across the hills. I kind of liked seein' it, even if it was the last time. Behind me the saddle creaked louder. Somebody had stepped off a horse. I felt somethin' touch my bare back. Then my light went out."

Purcell rose and paced back and forth in the moonlight. Young Hardesty sat watching him, a curious expression in his eyes. To the younger man the events he had related were simply facts, gruesome facts, some of them, but they did not grip his very vitals as they did those of Purcell.

"The first thing I recollect was the feel of a slicker, cold and clammy against my bare hide. I was settin' with my back against a rock. Squattin' on his heels, lookin' at me—no, it wasn't the Apache Kid—was Tonto Charley. He didn't say a word—just squatted there lookin' at me like I was something curious he had picked up somewhere. I reckon I was. Not knowin' but that I was dreamin', I tried it on. 'Hello, Charley,' I said. And just like nothin' had happened he said, 'Oh, it's you, Young Hardesty.' And that was all he said while he was leadin' up his horse—or after, when I was settin' in the saddle, and Charley afoot, headin' for the *palo verdes*."

"Which means," Purcell smiled for the first time in an hour. "This water hole, right here."

"Right here," nodded Young Hardesty. "I was feelin' pretty sick, and so weak I could just set in the saddle without hangin' on. Charley had wrapped his old slicker around me to keep the sun off. That was all the clothes I had, just then. When we got to the water hole Tonto made a little fire and fixed me some coffee. Things had been all mixed up for a spell, but after the coffee I commenced to see things straight." Young Hardesty gestured to a round-topped

rock a few feet back of Purcell. "Leanin' against that rock, yonder, was my old sawed-off Springfield, and my canteen. I wasn't so awful surprised. Nothin' would have surprised me much that mornin'. All the same I was mighty curious. But Charley wasn't one to talk much at any time. Gettin' a story out of him was like minin'. What I mean, you had to drill for what you got."

"He had your gun, and your canteen, eh? How about your overalls and rowdy?"

Young Hardesty grinned. "It was three, four days before I found out what had happened. Havin' had his fun with me, it seems the Apache Kid aimed to have some more, so he rode a circle for the *palo verdes* here. He aimed to surprise somebody in camp. I had told him I was to meet my friends there and I reckon he believed me. Anyhow, Tonto Charley, who was watchin' for me that evenin', didn't camp right at the water hole, like we are doin'. With papers out for him and no tellin' when some deputy would show up, Charley camped over yonder back of that ridge, where he could see the water hole and watch the back trail at the same time.

"Now the Apache Kid rode a circle, so as to come up on the water hole from the east. 'Long about midnight, Charley heard a pony comin' from that direction. The rainstorm had cleared the air; the moon was shinin' down strong. In makin' for the water hole, the Apache Kid had to ride past the ledge behind which Charley was camped. Charley said the Kid rode within twenty feet of the ledge, then stopped and sat his pony like he was listenin'. Mebby it wouldn't have happened, after all, if Charley hadn't seen that the Kid was packin' an extra rifle and an extra canteen. Now that canteen was an old army canteen that Charley gave me, one of the big ones. On it he had run a big T. C., one time when he was loafin' at the Cottonwoods. In turnin' to look 'round before he started to ride on, the Apache Kid's knee touched the canteen so that it moved, and the T. C. showed plain in the moonlight.

"Charley didn't dare reach for his rifle, layin' alongside, for fear the Kid would hear him. But a six-shooter is different. 'That Injun's got one canteen and one gun too many,' he said to himself. Reachin' back he pulled his gun. It was about twenty yards, and clear moonlight. He only fired twice. The second shot dropped the Kid's pony. You see, Charley didn't want that pony to break and run. Why? Well, he wanted to take a look at the canteen close, and also the rifle." Young Hardesty gestured. That was all. He had told his story.

Purcell said: "It checks up perfectly from muzzle to butt, with one exception."

"One which?"

"Evidence I can see. My hearing believes, and that part of my mind attached to it. But my eyes—" he paused and grinned at his partner.

"I'm here, ain't I?" said Young Hardesty.

"You? Yes. But—"

"Oh, hell!" Young Hardesty stretched and rose, apparently through with the subject. Casually he sauntered to the far side of the *palo verdes*. Purcell heard a clattering of loose stones. Casually Young Hardesty returned and threw something which looked like a knobbed stick at Purcell's feet. Purcell picked it up, then swiftly dropped it. It was the lower leg bone of a man. To it was still attached the shrunken, dry-rotted leather of an Apache moccasin.

"His horse—" said Young Hardesty, "if the coyotes haven't drug 'em off, you'll find it's backbone and ribs over behind that ledge yonder. You see Charley was a white man. He piled a lot of rocks on the Kid, so the coyotes wouldn't dig him up."

THE FEUD AT SINGLE SHOT

By Luke Short

Second of five parts

SYNOPSIS

DAVE TURNER and his friend Rosy Rand, whom he had met when both were incarcerated in the Yuma pen, were on their way back to Dave's ranch near Single Shot when their train was held up by robbers seeking three mine payrolls in the baggage car—a hold-up which was averted mostly through their efforts. This was less of a surprise to them than the reception they got at the town, where the sheriff told them to ride on to the next station, apparently because Dave was considered a bad man, although the crime for which he was sent away seemed to most people justifiable. At the next stop, Soledad, Dave's sister met them, to report that the D Bar T was in a bad way. Nesters were bothering them and a man named Hammond had started a gold mine in a near-by arroyo and was claiming a lake on Dave's land. On the way home Dave was shot from ambush, but Rosy killed the shooter. It took Dave only one night to recover from his wound and from his astonishment at learning his sister had married an Easterner named Winters, so the following day he and Rosy took the body of the ambusher into Single Shot, where the sheriff attempted to run them out of town again, expressing doubt about the killing.

"YOU say you got a dead man out there?" the sheriff asked.

"If you wasn't so knot-headed, you'd have known that two minutes

ago," Rosy said. "You reckon we're goin' to camp at the edge of town and whistle for you?"

CHAPTER VI

NESTER NEGOTIATIONS

THEY left the trail at the notch an hour after noon, heading more west than the trail would have taken them. Rosy had not spoken since they mounted at the Draw Three. Dave's face had been dark with fury, but he had ridden off his anger.

Now he turned to Rosy and smiled, a little sheepishly. "I reckon I lost my temper," he said.

"Plumb," Rosy said briefly. "I figgered you'd be sorry if you done anything to the old man. After all, we didn't have no proof. All he had comin' was a warnin' and I reckon he got that."

"It took me a long time to see that," Dave said slowly. "We haven't proof that he paid the man. All we can do is guess." He looked at Rosy again and grinned. "He didn't take to the idea much, did he?"

"He took to it so danged little that I'm wonderin' if we ain't shoutin' down the wrong barrel."

"Mebbe," Dave said. "You can look at him gettin' on the prod from two ways. He might not have done it and was mad because I said he did, or he might have done it and was mad because he got called."

"Whatever he thinks," Rosy said grimly, "he ain't goin' to buy you a drink the next time he sees you."

"Nor me him," Dave said briefly. He rode on in scowling silence before he spoke again. "What beats me, Rosy, is how Hammond knew I was comin' home. How'd he know I'd get off the train at Soledad instead of at Single Shot?"

"I been wonderin' when you'd think of that," Rosy said slowly. "When the sheriff said on the way out to the Draw Three that he never thought Hammond done it, I got to thinkin' maybe he was right. How would Hammond know you'd be passin' there in that draw at that time of night? How'd he know about it?" He crooked a leg over the saddlehorn and looked at Dave.

"This is a hell of a time to be tellin' me," Dave growled. "After I've riled Hammond."

"You wouldn't have stopped for anything I said," Rosy said with a grin. "You had to get it off your chest. Besides, I ain't sure who's right."

"Well, there was Mary, Ted, probably Harmon and Finnegan and whoever they told, and Sheriff Lowe and whoever he told, that knew I was goin' to get kicked out of Single Shot and would be in Soledad," Dave said.

"And the sheriff don't run off at the mouth," Rosy answered, looking at Dave.

"Then how'd Hammond know?"

"You tell me," Rosy said.

"Well, Harmon or Finnegan could have picked it up around Ted or Mary and then went to town and got a couple of drinks under their belts and spilled it."

"They could," Rosy admitted. "So maybe it wasn't Hammond at all. Maybe it was some one that wanted it to look like Hammond done it. Say, them nesters."

"I'm hopin' it isn't them," Dave said seriously.

"Why? You got to kick 'em off anyway."

"I'm hopin' I don't even have to do that," Dave said. He turned to Rosy and looked at him for a long moment. "Who do you think was behind it?"

"Everything points to Hammond," Rosy said. "And I hate to say it, because he don't look like that kind. But even without seein' those nesters, I'd say it was him. He's got more at stake than them farmers."

"I hope so," Dave said. "I'm hopin' those nesters are reasonable people."

Rosy stared at him. "Why?"

Dave drew a long breath and cuffed his hat off his forehead. "Here's the scheme. I thought of it last night, but didn't say anything until I'd seen Pearson. He gave me a ninety-day extension on the paper he's holding against the spread."

"Well?"

"Those nesters are squatted in good black land," Dave continued. "They're probably pretty good farmers. All right. I can get a crew of Mex's to ditch water down to them from the creek. It only runs about a mile from that bottomland, but it's shut off by a low hill." He looked at Rosy. "Let those nesters raise alfalfa on shares with plenty of water."

"You turnin' farmer?" Rosy asked slowly.

"No. But look. There's a bunch of mines around here besides these two towns. With water we could get three crops of alfalfa in the summer. Contract some of it, hold the rest and get sky-high prices for it later. In ninety days, I'll have enough from that to clean off the paper and start in stockin' the place."

"Sounds good," Rosy said, "providin' you can convince the nesters."

"That's where I'm headed for now," Dave said. "You wait."

A two hour's ride brought them to the lip of a grassy hill and they reined up. Before them a broad basin stretched, sandstone cliffs forming the south and west rim where the badlands began. At the bottom of the basin lay orderly checkerboards of fields, now fallow, waiting for the spring plowing.

Dave took the scene in at a glance, letting his eyes roam to the south cliff. There, small in the distance, at the base of the cliff, lay a cluster of buildings.

"Mary never said they had a town here," he said. His eyes narrowed a little and he frowned. By the looks of things, it was time somebody put a stop to their land-grabbing.

THEY rode point to the cabins, skirting the fields a little. There were six houses that Dave could see, log shacks. Sheds and pole corrals at the rear abutted squarely to the cliff. As they approached the first shack, Dave saw a man step out the door. He noted passively that the man was so tall he had to stoop to get through the door. He was unshaven, hatless, wearing dirty bib overalls and a flannel shirt.

They reined up before him and Dave let his eyes wander casually around the place before he brought them to bear on the nester.

"Howdy," he said amiably.

The nester leaned against the doorjamb of the house, regarding him hostilely with squinting, narrow eyes. He spat noisily.

"Lookin' for some one?" he growled, ignoring the greetings.

"Six of you," Dave said laconically.

"I'll do," the nester retorted.

He turned to spit and when he looked up again he was staring into the barrel of a steadily held Colt in Dave's hand.

"Close that door," Dave said softly. "You got a gun there just inside the door, so move slow."

The man did not move, did not take his eyes from Dave's face.

"I said 'move'," Dave said thickly.

The nester continued to stare insolently at him, his hands in his hip pockets.

Dave's gun exploded, bucked up in his hand, and a chip of wood behind the nester's head splintered off.

Dave saw the nester's face set a little as he leaped away from the door. Slowly, suddenly, he reached in and got the rawhide latchstring and swung the door shut.

"Now step out here," Dave said. He

leathered his gun and the nester stepped close to his horse.

Dave folded his arms across his chest and leaned on the saddle horn.

"I'm Dave Turner," he announced.

"Yeah."

"How would you like to hitch up a team and load your wagon and clear off my land?" he asked softly.

The nester's eyes shifted from Dave to Rosy and back to Dave. With the quickness of a cat, the nester drove his fist into the nose of Dave's horse. The horse jerked his head high, reared, and Dave slid out of the saddle. The nester turned and ran toward the house. He had a head start but he was heavy. Dave tripped him and the nester crashed into the door. The latch held and his head bumped resoundingly against the pine planking.

Dave stood a little ways off from him, unbuckling his cartridge belt and holsters, letting them fall to the ground.

"Get up and take a beatin'," Dave said softly, kicking the guns out of reach.

The nester looked at Rosy, who was sitting placidly, a leg crooked around his saddle-horn, smoking, watching.

The nester rose and faced Dave evilly, his arms hanging gorilla-like at his sides. Suddenly, he rushed in, head down. Dave stepped aside and straightened him up with a looping left to the mouth. The nester shook his head, wheeled, charged again, his chin couched in his great bull neck. Dave let him walk into a straight right arm three times, then avoiding a low kick and flailing arms, he sank a body swing into the nester's stomach, doubling the heavier man up. Dave crashed a left full in his face, then hooked over a vicious slug to the ear that stretched the nester heavily on the packed dirt around the doorstep.

Dave stood over him, breathing heavily. The nester groaned, raised himself on an elbow, looking at Dave.

"If you want any more, stand up," Dave said.

The nester shook his head dizzily and got to his feet.

"Well?" Dave asked.

"Not me. That's enough."

"Look what I got in the round-up," Rosy's voice said from the corner of the house.

Dave turned and saw four men standing sullenly before Rosy, who had dismounted and made the rounds of the other shacks while Dave was fighting.

"You *hombres* want to curl your tail too?" Dave asked them.

He got only sullen stares in reply.

"Get in the house," Dave said. "I got some turkey to talk."

The beaten nester threw open the door and Dave entered, picking up the rifle that leaned against the wall just inside the door. He stood it behind the door. The nester was evidently a bachelor, for his house consisted of one large room, a double-decked bunk at one end, stove and table at the other. Four home-made chairs and a shelf comprised the rest of the furniture.

"Sit down," Dave ordered, standing in the middle of the room.

When they were seated he rolled a cigarette casually while Rosy slouched against the door.

"I reckon you know why I'm here," Dave said, looking them over.

They nodded.

"I can run you off this land right now and burn your shacks. I reckon you know that."

"Sure," one of the nesters, a small wiry man in middle age replied.

"I could shoot your horses and smash up what machinery you got and you couldn't do much about it, could you?"

They looked at each other.

"I reckon not," the same man replied.

"You been squattin' on this land how long?" Dave asked.

"Three years or so," the big man replied. He was holding a bloody and soiled handkerchief to his face.

"All right," Dave answered. "I got

a proposition to make. You can take it or leave it. You five *hombres* can farm on a sixty-forty split here on an alfalfa crop. Startin' tomorrow, you can break up all the land you can. I'll get a crew of Mex's to blast an *acequia* through that low hill at the bend and put in lateral ditches. In a week and a half you can be ready to put in the crop if the weather's right. With plenty of water, we'll get three crops this summer and a good market for the hay with all the horses there are in these two towns and the mines. Suit yourself. Stick here and take a forty per cent share and work like hell, or clear out—way out."

"You mean you're puttin' water down here?" the middle-aged man asked incredulously. "Ditchin' it?"

"That's it."

The nester gave a brief glance at his companions. "Hell. I dunno about the rest of 'em, but I'll stick and glad of it. Damn glad of it. My son-in-law—he owns the place on the other side of me—will too. He ain't here, but I'll swear he will."

"I'll stay," the big nester said. "Hell, that'll be more money than I've made in three years since I been here."

"Me too," the third said.

"Same here," the other two joined in.

"Here's another thing," Dave said. "We been missin' cattle, my sister says." He paused and looked each nester in the eye. "If what she says is true, you'd better get the runnin' iron out for those *oreanoed* calves. There won't be any questions asked—unless the tally's way short of what she says it should be. I'll give you range now, so long as our tally is so low. When we get the range stocked, you'll have to see me or move your stuff out."

The nesters nodded uncomfortably.

"If things go right," Dave continued, "there's no reason why this arrangement can't go on. It's up to you all. You've got more good bottom land here than you can ever farm. You've got water—or will have it. I'll have the seed ordered in Single Shot and delivered to Soledad and you can haul it up from there some time next week.

"I don't feel right about this," the middle-aged nester said. "I never have. I've usually paid for what I took, but this here spread had so danged much land—good farmin' land too—that they wasn't usin' that I reckon I hated to see it go to waste. But from now on, Turner, I'm payin' my debts. You'll get nothing from me but work. My name's Rourke."

"All right," Dave said, grinning. "Let it ride that way, Rourke. If there's anything you need, and I can give it to you, come up to the house."

As they rode away in the dusk, they saw the women and children standing in the doorways of the shacks watching their departure.

"I wonder what Hammond is goin' to say when he hears about this?" Rosy said.

Dave laughed. "I reckon he can't say much more than he has already."

CHAPTER VII

THUNDER OVER OLD CARTRIDGE

BY lantern light—for it was past ten when they reached the ranch—Rosy rubbed down the horses, grained them and was forking down some hay when he heard some one let down the corral bars and lead in a horse.

The stable door swung open and Winters stood in the doorway, his dark face scowling against the light.

"Oh, it's you," he said amiably, when he saw Rosy. "Mind forking down some hay for my horses?"

"Sure." Rosy answered.

Winters led the horse in, a big bay with a Roman nose, still breathing heavily, his sides wet with sweat. Rosy was about to speak, but held his tongue. If

the *hombre* didn't know enough to walk a horse after lathering him, then let him lose a couple of horses in the process of finding out. Maybe it was lucky Dave was in the house. He would have spoken, maybe lost his temper.

The hay forked down, Rosy sat on the feed box and stroked the ear of the ugly sorrel Dave had been riding. He watched Winters tend his horse. His nostrils were drawn a little at the ammoniac stench of the barn and Rosy guessed that he didn't like it and never would.

"Look over the range today?" Winters asked.

"Took that jasper into town on his horse," Rosy answered.

"What did you find out?"

"Name of Freeman. Used to work for Hammond."

Winters leaned against the bay's shoulder, frowning a little. "Freeman? I don't remember the name. Did you see—that is—was—"

"Sure. We saw the sheriff," Rosy said casually. "He didn't say much."

"And you say this man used to work for Hammond?" Winters said, eyeing Rosy shrewdly.

"That's it."

Winters snorted, then smiled knowingly. "I don't suppose Dave has told you what Hammond's trying to do about the lake up here."

"He told me," Rosy said. "We saw Hammond too."

"What did he say?"

"He's shootin' on sight at next meetin'," Rosy said dryly.

Winters mouth gaped a little. "Well, I'm damned! What's Dave going to do?"

"He'll do the same."

"Well, I'm damned!" Winters repeated. He whistled an exclamation and looked pleased. Rosy watched him, wondering why.

"I wouldn't tell Mrs. Winters if I was you," Rosy said. "She might worry."

"No. Of course not," Winters said. "Not a woman's business anyway. Well, I'm damned!"

As if to punctuate his speech a dim roll of thunder came to their ears. The first tentative slaps of rain, dull and widely spaced, echoed hollowly on the barn roof and Rosy went to the stable door to make sure there were no saddles on the corral bars.

Winters followed him into the corral and stopped, hands on hips, looking at the sky.

"Glad I'm finished with that hole," he said. "It'll have two feet of water in it."

"Prospectin'?" Rosy asked.

"Yes. I putter around some. I got some color up in those canyons to the west of that rock slide on Old Cartridge. May not be much, but it keeps me on my toes in case I want to get back in the minin' game."

"Sure," Rosy agreed. He let down a bar and stepped through, holding it up for Winters.

"I got so interested there this afternoon I worked till way after dark by lantern light. You'd never guess, but—"

"We better hightail it," Rosy cut in. "We're goin' to get wet."

In the house, Dave was talking with Mary. She smiled at Rosy, gave her husband a fleeting kiss, and set the long delayed supper on the table as she listened to Dave's story.

"So with any luck," he was saying, "we can clean up that paper with three crops of hay. The nesters'll work. They'll make a nice stake doin' it too."

Mary nodded. "As soon as it's clear, we can get some registered stuff from Jerry Boardman. He told me he's overstocked and wants to get rid of some. Long terms too. He isn't crowded for money, but he doesn't like the paper on the place."

"Don't blame him," Dave said briefly. "And we won't take any unless we see

our way ahead. It may be a slow pull, sis, but we got what it takes: land, water, and grass."

"We can't help but make out," Mary said excitedly. "Now you have it settled with the nesters and they'll leave our cattle alone."

She suddenly seemed to realize that she had indirectly cast reflections on Ted's ability to deal with the nesters, and she flushed. She sat silently by Ted, listening to the small talk of the day's experience from which was carefully omitted any mention of the quarrel with Hammond. Rosy thought she looked pale and her face tired, but he laid it to the worry about the ranch and its prospects.

The meal finished and cigarettes smoked, Dave helped Mary with the dishes. Finished, he yawned, stretched and informed them that he was going to bed. Rosy followed him, leaving Winters and Mary in the kitchen.

"Tomorrow we split up," Dave informed him as they undressed in their room. "I'm goin' to locate all the cattle and get ready for a count. You go to Single Shot, order the seed for them nesters and round up a couple of riders. Then ride over to Soledad and get hold of Pablo Manero at the frame store there. Tell him I sent you and that we want about ten Mexicans, tools and all, to put in that ditch. Put what stuff you need—dynamite, tools, headgates and such—on the books. He'll carry us into the next century if he has to. And —oh, I'll tell you in the mornin'. I'm talkin' in my sleep now. G'night, you sheriff prodder."

"G'night, you nester-spraddler," Rosy answered sleepily.

IT was a dull, gathering, earth-rocking, window-rattling roar that woke them.

Rosy raised up on his elbow. "Dave," he called softly.

"I heard it," Dave said.

"What was it?"

Another report came booming through the rainy night.

"Dynamite," Dave guessed.

"Goddlemighty!" Rosy whispered. "There must be a ton in each shot."

They lay silent as three more vast detonations in quick succession seemed to shake the house.

"Where'd it come from?" Rosy asked.

"Up by the mountain, Old Cartridge way," Dave replied. "I'm takin' a *pasear*. You comin'?"

They dressed in the dark and left the house noiselessly, first picking out slickers from behind the back door. A steady drizzle was beating down and the first faint lights in the east announced approaching day.

They saddled their horses swiftly and swung out through the mud up to the trail to the notch. A raw wind hurried the rain, bringing with it occasionally a fleeting smell of burnt powder. They rode in silence, giving their horses their heads and letting them pick a footing up the long up-grade. When they reached the timber, gray daylight allowed them to see. Dave rode ahead, urging his horse.

A half mile from the notch in the rock rim, Dave left the trail and started up the rock-strewn steeper grade that announced the mountain. Rosy, puzzled, reined off after him. A cold, piercing wind was coming off the mountain, making his slicker wooden.

"What's up here?" Rosy asked innocently.

Dave's eyes swept him and in them Rosy saw a strange bleakness.

"Maybe you'll never see it," Dave said.

Suddenly, it dawned on Rosy where they were going and why Dave had ridden so unerringly for this point.

THE timber was thin now, the grade steeper and their horses had to fight for a footing.

They mounted a hog's-back and Dave reined up, staring. Before them, a basin seemed to have been scooped out of the very base of the runneled mountainside. It was roughly oval, quarter of a mile in length. Its bottom, slanting steeply to the center from all sides, was a thick, black, shining-wet slime of mud. Steady trickles of water seeped up thinly in some places. Rosy's eyes followed the level rim around and there, toward the east edge nearest the rock rim, a chunk seemed to have been knocked out of the rim, leaving in its place a wedge of gray and storm-blanketed sky. The forty yards from the edge of the rock rim to the edge of the lake had been blasted out!

The lake was no more, nothing but this black pit of slime, a small pool at the very bottom mirroring the sky, left to mark it.

Dave's face was paper white, his eyes as cold and expressionless as marbles, his jaw muscles cording tightly above his neck.

"Damn Hammond!" His voice was clogged with fury.

He wheeled his horse and rode the hog's-back up to the wedge, then dismounted, Rosy at his side. Close to it, the gap was terrific. Perhaps fifty feet across, the rock had been blasted clean in a series of shots, leaving the bottom of the gap only a few feet above the bottom of the lake.

"Springs blown underground too," Dave muttered bleakly. Even in the short time since they had come up, Rosy noticed, the seepage through the slime had tapered off until now these spots that once marked bubbling springs were only spots of mud, a little more shiny with recent water than the rest of the lake bed.

Dave rolled a cigarette with trembling fingers as Rosy stared glumly at the scene.

"Since grand-dad's time that lake level hadn't varied three inches," Dave said slowly. "That creek out of it ran the whole length of our range, watered all our stock except some scattered water holes. Now the spread isn't worth the paper that covers it," he finished savagely, crumpling his cigarette in convulsed fingers. He laughed harshly, bitterly, casting savage glances at the sky, his eyes finally settling on Rosy. "That does it, pardner. We're hamstrung proper. Dry-gulched."

Rosy nodded mutely and walked out to the edge of the rock-rim, looking down the long slope through the drizzle. Dave lagged over to him.

"He knowed dynamite," Rosy said tonelessly. He pointed down to the bottom of the gap which sloped sharply down. "The first shot was put about fifty or sixty feet down outside the rock-rim on the down-slope. It blowed a big gouge out. The next was put on the rock rim and it tumbled the top of the wedge out. The next two was put one behind the other and the rock was throwed down into the valley instead of the lake. A neat job," he finished savagely.

"He had this planned a long time," Dave said slowly. "He didn't have time to learn about that irrigatin' scheme of ours, but he'd had it planned. He had to single-jack holes in that rock, drill them. It'd take time. Plenty. Lots of night-work." Pausing, he looked at Rosy, pain in his eyes. "We was sleepin' two of them nights, Rosy. And I could have killed him yesterday."

Rosy nodded. "You can't be everywhere, pardner, and know everything."

"But dammit!" Dave said savagely, "we passed within a mile of this place twice yesterday. Why didn't I come up and look the place over? Or take you up there? After I'd had that row with him, why didn't I come up and make sure? Anything, just so I could have

been here and spotted those drilled holes."

"Easy," Rosy told him soothingly.

He rolled two cigarettes and gave Dave one, which he accepted and had a hard time lighting with his trembling hand. He inhaled deeply and the smoke seemed to calm him.

"Well, let's go," he said quietly. "The sooner I meet him and kill him, the better I'll feel."

"You can't shoot a man in bed," Rosy reminded him. It was early yet. "Wait till he's on the streets. Choose him and cut down on him. We'll take him one at a time. He can't down us both."

"But I'm first," Dave said grimly.

"All right," Rosy stood up and looked over the scene, a wry smile on his face. "That comes about as close to bein' the bottom of low down as anything I ever heard. He knew when you got home, he couldn't bluff you out of the lake. He decided to kill you first, and if that failed, then he'd blow the lake out on you. He couldn't get it, so he didn't want you to have it either. There ain't been a rope made that ain't too good to hang that jasper with." He threw his cigarette away. "Let's go. The more I think of it, the more I'd like to kill that *hombre* in bed."

Rosy discovered that his own hands were shaking with anger. The more he thought of it, the worse it seemed. It was sheer spitefulness, much worse to Rosy's mind than if Hammond had lain in wait for them and bushwhacked them both. A man of that stripe would be the kind that would rowel his horse's guts out, then not even bother to shoot him. It was the work of a man who loved torture, and that, to Rosy, was as low as a man could get.

The rain was slanting grayly as they mounted again, Dave now in the lead. He slid down the small hog's-back and set off for the trail. He was a hunched, bitter-looking figure on the big sorrel, and he stared straight ahead.

Rosy took a last look at the slime-covered rocks and cursed again, long and passionately. He mounted, squirmed until his slicker was settled and nosed his bay down the hog's-back, paying no attention to the reins. The horse was dispirited too, and wet. Feeling Rosy slack in the saddle, the horse looked ahead for Dave's sorrel, but he was out of sight. The bay edged off the trail of Dave's tracks a way, then, Rosy not responding, he headed for the shelter of a tall jackpine. Under it he stopped, and Rosy roused from his reverie.

"Stretch out, you jughead," he growled, pulling the bay over.

Suddenly his glance fell to the carpet of pine needles and automatically, he pulled the horse up. There, just where the needles thinned out and where the rain fell in a thin, broken mist, he saw a cigarette butt. It was a tailor-made.

Rosy dismounted. As he stooped to pick up the cigarette, he saw a track, which brought a low whistle from him. It was fresh, made during the night, and had not been washed out by the rain. It had the sole of a boot and the heel of a shoe. It was a freak track, one seldom seen in that country. He scowled over it for a minute, measured it roughly with his hand, picked up the cigarette butt and put it in his pocket and mounted again.

He had no doubt that Hammond had squatted under this tree to set off the charges of dynamite—Hammond, or one of his understrappers. It was just a bit more evidence that would serve to damn the mining man. A small pile of fuse scrapings near the trunk of the jackpine confirmed this.

Dave was waiting for him beside the trail. Together, they rode into the notch, the sky out over the valley gray as death.

"This will be a pleasure," Dave growled, looking straight ahead.

"Won't it?" Rosy grunted, also looking straight ahead.

CHAPTER VIII

WATER AND GOLD

SHED MARTIN fumbled with wet hands in his pocket and drew out a moist plug of tobacco. He stood lost in the black vellum of night, listening to the ore rattle in the wagons, watching the rain channel off his hat brim, almost obscuring the lighted window of the office of the Draw Three.

"He'll have to like it," Shed muttered, wrenching off a sizable third of the plug, feeling its cold sponginess as he rolled it around his cheek. He cursed softly, soothingly, cursed the night, his luck, Buck Hammond, horses in general, and his own in particular; then lifted reluctant feet and made for the office door.

"He'll have to like it," old Shed repeated.

Hammond looked up from his desk when the door opened.

"Hullo, Shed," he greeted the figure that slammed the door.

"Howdy, Buck," Shed grunted.

He felt his resolution failing. Hammond's fine blue eyes regarded him warmly from a square, craggy face. A trace of a friendly smile played on the wide mouth as the mine owner swung in his chair to face the freighter.

"How're you doin'?" Hammond asked. "Have it cleaned up by seven o'clock?"

"I reckon," Shed said. "Look here, Buck. If this ain't a hell of a night to—ah, hell!" he finished savagely. He couldn't do it. A man couldn't refuse Buck Hammond anything.

"What's the matter? Anything wrong?" Hammond asked, sensing what the grizzled old freighter was trying to get out.

"Naw. I just came in for a knife. You gotta' have a knife to cut this damn dark if you git anywheres," Shed growled.

Hammond reached wearily for a bottle which was in the depths of a bottom desk drawer. It was followed by a glass. He indicated them both to Shed.

"Have a drink."

Shed accepted enthusiastically, eyeing Hammond closely. He tossed off the drink, smacked his lips and set the glass down with a clatter.

"Have another, Shed," Hammond said.

"Thanky no," Shed said. He scowled a little. "You look a shade under the weather, Buck. You ain't lettin' this outfit get you down, are you?"

Hammond's grave eyes sought Shed's and he shook his head slowly. "Ever been called a murderer, Shed? A bushwhacker, or the man that hired a bushwhacker? Ever been called a water thief?"

Shed shook his head slowly in negation. "Not to my face, no. I'm just a tol'able scrapper and not so fast with a gun, but I don't reckon I'd let a man call me that. Why?"

"I got called all of them this afternoon," Hammond said quietly.

"Who?"

"Young Turner up at the D Bar T. Claimed I hired Freeman—remember him?—to take a pot at him last night from a dry gulch. He thinks I done it to get that lake up there we been quarrelin' about."

"The hell," Shed said softly. He could understand the hurt look on Hammond's face now. "What happened?"

"The sheriff stopped us before we got to our guns." Hammond's eyes glinted strangely and his jaw hardened for a moment, then he seemed to sag again.

"Dick Turner's kid? The one that's been in jail?" Shed asked. He spat. "Hell, Buck," he said in a voice which was strangely gentle, "I wouldn't take that to heart. He's a kid, and a crooked one, if what ever' one says is true. He needs a spankin' before he's very much older."

Hammond shook his head slowly.

"No, it ain't that, Shed. He looks

like a decent kid, young and hot-headed, but clean." He looked up at Shed. "What hurts me, Shed, is that he believed it himself. He believed I was everything he called me and was willin' to back it up. He'd have filled his hand in a second if he hadn't been so dang mad he never thought of it."

"Was it over that lake?"

"Partly. Mostly on account of Freeman, though." Hammond sighed, and suddenly smiled a weary smile. "Years ago, Shed, I reckon I wouldn't have cared. Now, I'm old, and I've lived as square as a man can in these times. It—hurt like hell."

Shed made an awkward gesture of sympathy.

"Don't think nothin' of it. Next time you see him, cut down on him like you would a sidewinder. Sooner some of these tough kids learn they ain't the men to back up their mouth, this country'll be worth livin' in agin'."

"I guess that's what it's comin' to," Hammond said slowly. "I told him next time we met not to waste any talk."

"That's it," Shed declared emphatically. "I dunno the kid myself, but any one that calls Buck Hammond forked has not only got him to fight, but me too."

"Thanks," Hammond said wearily. He got a hold on himself and straightened up. "Think you'll get her finished tonight?" he asked.

Shed raised a hand and they listened to the ore crashing out into the wagons. Shed smiled.

"We'll make it," he said grimly, "but damn me if I don't think we'll have to swim the last load into Single Shot?"

"Boggy?"

"Plain hell," Shed said. "Ever try to

drive a six-horse hitch through a danged swamp in the rain? It ain't no fun."

"I know it," Hammond said. 'I'm sorry I had to work the men through tonight, Shed, but you know how I stand. If I have to pay demurrage on those cars, I wouldn't be able to meet next month's wages."

"I know," Shed said glumly. "Seems like a man can't make a livin' nowadays even with a gold mine."

"Not this one," Hammond said, and his eyes gleamed with humor.

Shed grinned, then suddenly became serious.

"Pull out of it, Buck. Take an old freighter's advice. I seen 'em come and go and I've hauled enough ore to fill the Rio Grande eighty miles beyond El Paso. You git it in the neck sooner or later. You've spraddled this outfit and it's bleedin' you dry. Sell it, and git you a hoss ranch. They tell me you've had a chance to unload it for a heap of money."

"Damned if I will," Hammond growled. "I've got every cent to my name in this, Shed, and it's goin' to pay big some day. Either that or it'll break my heart."

"And it'll break your heart four ways to hell," Shed declared emphatically. He buttoned up his slicker. "But it won't be my freightin' that does it. I'll have every danged pebble in them cars by seven or I'll pay them demurrage charges and a year's interest to boot."

He turned to the door and yanked it open. Standing just outside the door was a slim, slickered figure. He peered at it silently.

"What in tarnation hell are you doin' out on a night like this?" he asked sternly, but not unkindly.

"Why in tarnation hell shouldn't I be out?" a girl's voice mimicked his gruff one.

Shed guffawed and held the door open for her.

"Hello, Dad," she called to Hammond. She turned to Shed. "Here I am freightin' ore on a night like this while you sit in here warmin' your pants, Shed Martin. And you a mule-skinner." Her manner of speaking was such a perfect imitation of Shed's that all of them laughed. Shed went out, his loud guffaw trailing him.

Hammond's eyes were humorous as she went up to him and kissed him, then swung a dripping saddle-bag onto his desk.

"You better look out," Hammond said. "Shed'll be askin' you to marry him."

"I like him," she said. Her short straight nose wrinkled a little as she laughed.

Hammond looked at the clock on the wall. "Four o'clock. What are you doin' up and prowlin'?"

She drew off her Stetson, revealing an unruly mass of corn-colored hair, the edges reflecting beads of rain.

"I couldn't sleep, Dad. After the man came in with your message that you'd stay out all night, I thought I'd get a long sleep. I ate supper alone and went to bed and couldn't sleep. Then I thought you might be hungry, so I decided to get up and bring you out some sandwiches and coffee." She winked solemnly at him, her blue eyes warm and sparkling. "No. I decided to come out and help you freight ore. Earn my keep."

"You shouldn't be—" Hammond started to growl.

"Now, Dad. Pancho knows his way out here from Single Shot in the dark, so there's nothing to worry about." She grinned and Hammond's scowl disappeared. "He did fall down, though. You should see him. He's a palomino on one side and a buckskin on the other."

Hammond shook his head gravely. "And you might be out there now, pinned under him, waitin' for a freighter to find you."

"Pinned under him in this mud? All I'd have to do would be to fold my

arms and I'd sink out of sight. I could swim out from under him."

HAMMOND laughed in spite of himself. He watched her seat herself on the desk top, extract a huge bundle of sandwiches and a whisky bottle full of coffee from the saddlebag and lay them on the desk. Suddenly, his eyes were grave.

"Do you mind bein' poor, Dorsey?" he asked gently.

Her hands paused and she regarded him soberly. "Of course not. Why do you ask, Dad?"

Hammond shrugged wearily. "I just wondered. We aren't makin' much more than poor wages out of the mine now and won't until we open it up more. Then too, it looks like I got a court fight comin' with young Turner up at the D Bar T."

"Has he been in?"

"Yes. Been in and—well, we quarreled."

Hammond told her about Dave and Rosy's visit, omitting the accusations Dave had made and the ensuing struggle.

"It looks like we'll be crowded," he finished. "It looks like I can't get the water without a court fight and I haven't the money for one. My water," he added bitterly.

A sullen, sudden gathering rumble shook the building, punctuating Hammond's speech.

"What was that?" Dorsey asked. "Thunder?"

"Sounded like blasting," Hammond said absently. He got out of his chair and started to pace the floor.

"But, Dad," Dorsey said, "do you think it will go that far?"

"I do," Hammond said emphatically. "Just as far as Turner can—"

A second detonation, louder than the first, came rocketing to their ears.

Hammond listened a moment, then strode to the door and opened it.

"Shed!" he called.

In the interval of waiting, he turned to Dorsey and she could see the concern in his eyes.

"Yeah?" a voice called out of the dark.

"Was that blasting?" Hammond asked.

"Dunno. It sounded like lightnin' hitting. You could hear the rock movin' up the hill, but there wasn't no light."

"Who'd be blasting now?"

Three more earth-shaking, coughing roars came to them in quick succession, the echoes slapping across the broad valley.

"Hell, that's dynamite," Shed said. He was standing in the doorway now before Hammond and Dorsey.

As the echo died out, a sullen, dim roar rose over the patter of the rain. They listened in silence a full minute, looking at each other.

"Sounds like water," Shed ventured.

Hammond stared at him, his face slowly draining of color.

"My God. Do you suppose it might—"

"The lake!" Dorsey cried. "The D Bar T lake!"

Hammond whirled, raced across the room for his slicker.

"Shed, get those teams away from the buildings. Drive hell-or-leather for high ground anywhere outside of this wash!" Shed disappeared and he turned to Dorsey. "Honey, you get Pancho and make your way up the hill here. Be sure and stay out of the arroyo. Give him his head. And hurry."

He plunged out into the night and Dorsey called after him: "Dad! Dad!" There was no answer.

In the dark, Hammond made for the mine shaft, the entrance of which lay precisely in the forks of the two man-made ditches that were even now diverting the water on either side of the cluster of mine buildings. Six men down there, working night-shift. He cursed

bitterly, striking blindly through the dark. Then something cut him savagely across the shins, checking his speed with a crushing pain. He fell forward on his face in a mass of cable. The winch, he knew now. He struggled to get up and found that he could not even stand, much less move. His lip bled where he bit it trying to check the pain.

"Shed!" he called out into the night. "Shed! Oh Shed!"

He repeated it until a voice answered him. He listened, a part of him almost aloof, hearing the sound which had started as a murmur now growing louder, more rumbling.

"Where are yuh?"

"Here. Come here." He could hear Shed slog across the stretch of mud, could see the freighters in the inadequate, rain-slanted light given off by the lanterns, fighting their six-horses in an effort to get them turned.

"Yeah?"

"There's men down in the shaft, Shed. Six of them. I've broken—my leg—I think. Shed—can you reach them?"

But Shed had already gone down the slanting shaft. Hammond could hear his great voice roaring, calling the men, dimmer now as the seconds passed. Thank God, the shaft went horizontally into the hillside and not vertically. They might have a chance to get out.

Then the full force of accident hit Hammond. His mind went straight as an arrow to the cause.

"Dave Turner," he said aloud, and then he cursed viciously.

So Turner had been so damned contemptible that he had resorted to this—blowing out the lake on top of the Draw Three. Ruining it, endangering lives. And all because he knew that the lake was rightfully Hammond's and belonged on Draw Three property.

Turner, after their talk, had feared a court fight, because he knew he would lose it. Like the cur he was, he determined that if the D Bar T couldn't have it, then neither could the Draw Three. All the horror and viciousness of it came to Hammond like a blow and his eyes swam black with fury.

When he was calm again, he knew he would have to move, get out. The whole damned lake was coming down the hill from the sound of it, and he'd be caught. He crawled painfully on his hands and knees through the slime, the searing torture of his leg making the night dance in front of his eyes with countless stars. He heard a horse gallop away and dimly realized that it was Dorsey fleeing.

When he came to the diversion ditch, he knew the water was only a few inches from the top. He had to crawl through it and its chill seemed to clamp every muscle in his body to its nearest bone. He rested on the other side, feeling the air now and the rain as warm as soup to his skin.

The sound, the rumble, was closer now, more ominous. He began crawling again, feeling the sharp stones on his knees almost a relief from the pain that was stabbing up from below his knees. His right ankle dragged sickenly, awkwardly: he could feel it trailing flatly out to one side. The rocks were bigger now, giving him some sort of handhold and leverage as he lifted himself among them fighting his way up the hill.

"Shed'll be lost," he thought miserably. "Lost, drowned. Seven of them, like rats."

He heard the first warning hiss of water off to his right as it raced along and slapped the arroyo walls, spreading out over the top of the diversion ditches in what he could imagine was a bubbling, tumbling fan.

THEN the noise, a great welling roar, seemed to charge out of the night. He fought frantically to gain a greater height on the hillside as the thin scream of a horse rose above the din.

It opened up, this howling, furious bedlam. The unleashed lake had jumped the watercourse, lifted itself in a mighty surge over the surrounding land. He could feel its swift tug at him as it runneled off the rocks. He dimly saw the light wink out in the office, heard and felt the timbers of the building crash and scrape.

The water was bringing down boulders with it in drunken lunges. The noise of one as it gouged its way through the building came to him; the dissolving tinkle of crushed machinery was beaten down into the night by the still driving rain.

Thank God he could not see. It would have been a savage torture to watch it, watch the strangling horses tossed like straw on the torrent, the men who were free helpless to do anything for them.

In a great, screeching shudder, the main building upended and was dissolved in the flood. He could hear the water slap against the far bank of the creek-bed a hundred yards below the mine. It became more calm as it spread out, finding its way down the bed toward Single Shot.

Then it died, almost as suddenly as it had begun. He could hear the arroyo running loud and full, but the bulk of the water had passed and had poured around him. The rain was still driving, monotonous, cold and unrelenting.

He waited, his ankle throbbing viciously. Were any of the men saved? Was Dorsey? He grew cold at the thought. She must have been. She had had time to get her horse and ride up the hill out of reach of the flood.

The bottomless black void of the night was graying a little over the mountains to the east. He called loudly and got no answer.

"Better stay here," he thought dully. "If I try to move I'll faint and will just as likely as not fall face down in a pool of water and drown."

He listened for sounds that would tell him of human activity, but the rain smothered everything. As the night

slowly lifted he could make out the scene before him. Where the mine buildings had stood there was a sodden mass of the heaviest machinery. The buildings had been entirely swept from around them, even the floors. Part of the main building lay folded against the east bank of the wash far below him. The rest had evidently been carried down stream on the crest of the flood. He could see where he was now. He had managed to crawl up the hill perhaps fifty yards and a hundred yards away from the arroyo.

All the horror and desolation and cruelty of it was increased ten-fold by the weak dawn light. A murderous fury filled him. Turner would pay for this with his life as long as a drop of Buck Hammond's blood ran red. In his rage, he clutched at the jagged rocks until his hands bled.

They found him there unconscious.

CHAPTER IX

SHOWDOWN AT MIDNIGHT

IT did not occur to Rosy and Dave as they rode down the mud-slimed wash that the lake had cascaded down this natural channel, or if it did they did not mention it to each other. The mud was fetlock deep and the going was slow. When they rounded the bend at the bottom that showed them the mouth, they reined up and stared.

"It's gone," Dave said, looking at the boulder-strewn ground where the mine had been.

"Insurance," Rosy said bitterly. "Insures the mine then blows a lake out on top of it."

As they pulled down into the mouth of the arroyo they saw men working frantically. One of the men spied them and waved them over. Three men were laboring steadily with crowbars and shovels. The fourth dropped his shovel and slogged through the mud to reach them.

"Give us a hand, will you?" the man asked, his face streaming with sweat.

"What's the trouble?" Rosy asked.

"There's seven men down this mine shaft," the man said, pointing to the spot. "The mouth's clogged with boulders and mud and there's a chance they may be alive. They was down there when the lake went out up above."

Rosy looked at Dave, who turned to the man. "Hammond isn't down there, is he?"

"No. He's in town, I reckon. He got hurt a little."

"How bad?"

"Not bad, I heard. Can you give us a lift?"

Again Dave and Rosy looked at each other. They had both ridden for the last half hour with a murderous hatred in their hearts, driving straight for a goal shrouded in gun-smoke and death. And now they were being asked to take enough time from killing to try and save lives. Neither of them hesitated.

"Sure," Dave said. They dismounted and followed the man over to his companions. "I reckon he can wait this long," Dave said to Rosy.

"Didn't even bother to get his men out of the shaft," Rosy said, his face still bleak and cold.

They worked with crowbars and shovels for an hour until help came out from town. It was hopeless to begin with, Rosy saw, but he said nothing. It was their duty to leave nothing undone if the lives below could be saved.

When other men and wagons and the pumps came out from town, they gave way to the fresher men, got their horses and started into town.

They had learned from the men at the mine that Hammond had been taken to Dr. Fullerton's and they rode through town to the main corner, turned left at the Free Throw and easily found the doctor's house a half block above. It was

a frame house, neatly painted white, with a deep yard and a huge glassed-in porch at the side. This was the Single Shot hospital.

Dave felt a strange, icy calm as he knocked on the door and waited for it to be opened by the housekeeper.

"Is Hammond in here?" he asked the woman who opened the door.

"Yes. What do you want?"

"On the porch?"

"Of course. But he can't see any one," the housekeeper declared.

Dave simply shouldered past her. To his right was an open door which led into the darkened doctor's office. The door to the porch opened onto it. Dave strode into the dark room, hitching up his gun belt.

"I thought so," a flat, toneless voice said.

Dave stopped. It was the sheriff's voice, and Dave waited until his eyes became accustomed to the dark room. He picked out the sheriff standing just to one side of the door, and he saw the warm glint of the two Colts in his hands.

"You can see I got guns throwed on you," the sheriff said. "You better hand over your own."

"Get out of the way," Dave said briefly, and took a step forward. The sheriff's guns tilted a little higher and his thumbs slid back a quarter of an inch on the hammers.

"I wouldn't if I was you," he said quietly.

Again Dave stopped. "Hank, there's two of us here. We can't beat you, but one of us will get you. Now clear out."

"I wouldn't go no further," the sheriff said flatly, and there was a deep, warning menace in his voice that arrested Dave in mid-motion.

"Give me them guns," the sheriff said, recognizing his advantage. "Talk to him all you want, but give me them guns. There's a woman in there. And you can't kill a man in bed."

Dave sighed loudly, shuddering a little with the cold violence of his anger. He had a desperate impulse to go for his guns and take his chances of coming out alive with the sheriff. But his sense of justice prevented him. He had seen too much wanton killing and destruction on this day to want any more of it.

"All right, Hank," he said bleakly. "But I'm warnin' you. You and all the deputies you can swear in in seven years ain't goin' to keep me from killin' Hammond."

"I know that," the sheriff said. "I'm just tryin' to put it off until the fight's a little more even. Now hand them guns over, both of you."

He received the four guns and wedged them in his belt, then opened the door and backed through it onto the porch. "Now come on," he said quietly.

Dave stepped through the door. There were four beds on the porch and in the far one, Hammond was lying propped up on a pillow. Dorsey was sitting on the foot of his bed, but Dave did not even see her.

He walked across the room slowly to the foot of Hammond's bed. The mining man's face was slowly flushing and his hands plucked the covers convulsively.

"You damned, murderin', bushwhackin', water-thievin' skunk!" Dave said slowly and distinctly, his voice quivering with contempt. He had hardly finished speaking before Dorsey was on her feet facing him. She slapped him sharply across the face, but Dave did not stir, did not even look at her, did not even take his eyes from Hammond. It was as if she were not there at all.

Hammond struggled to sit up, but his face twisted in pain and he sank back on the pillow again.

"Hank, give me a gun," he pleaded hoarsely.

"He took mine away," Dave said thickly, "or you'd be dead now."

Hammond groaned in his rage.

"You couldn't get the lake so you had to ruin it for me," Dave continued, his voice slow and thick. "Ruin it, and drown seven of your own men doin' it. Just for revenge."

"That's a damned lie!" Hammond thundered, suddenly, finding his voice. In spite of his pain, he lunged up in bed and pointed a blunt finger at Dave. "You did it yourself. You blew that lake out to ruin the Draw Three because you knew that water was mine!"

Dave's mouth slacked in amazement at Hammond's words, and he looked dumbly at Rosy who was standing just beside him. "Why—why"—he looked back at Hammond and his face was black with fury—"you think I—why damn you—"

THE sheriff grabbed his arms and pinioned them behind him as he brushed Dorsey aside and started for the bed.

"Killed seven men!" Hammond roared. "Seven men, and you ain't fit to wipe the boots of a one of 'em."

Dave lunged again. Dorsey screamed and Rosy lunged at the sheriff.

"Get those guns, Dave!" Rosy clipped out, and he crooked his elbow around the sheriff's neck and pulled back.

"I did it! I did it!" the sheriff roared, half strangled. "Let me go. I did it!"

These damning words, shouted at the top of the sheriff's lungs, arrested Rosy and Dave in mid-movement. The sheriff twisted out of Rosy's arm, his hand streaking to his gun. His hand came up filled and he backed off a way.

"Thanks, Rand," he said dryly. He looked at Hammond and Dave. "I wondered when you two jaspers would tumble to this."

"What?" Rosy asked.

"Why, that neither Hammond nor Turner done the dynamitin'." the sheriff shouted.

The three men looked at each other blankly.

"You damned knot-headed fools," the sheriff continued, his voice scornful and suddenly quiet. "Calm down enough to look at it. Why would Hammond blow the dam out and ruin his mine and drown seven men?" He turned to Hammond. "And you, Buck. You're older. You should have saw it all along. Turner thinks that lake is his, whether it is or not. Would he blow out that dam and spoil every drop of water on his spread—ruin it—just to ruin you? Git some sense, you danged fools!"

Hammond looked at Dave, then at Rosy. The two younger men were staring at the sheriff.

"You mean," Rosy said slowly, "that some one else did it?"

"That's it," the sheriff grunted. "The hombre that did it wanted Turner to

think Hammond done it, and wanted Hammond to think Turner done it."

"How do you know?" Hammond demanded.

The sheriff whirled on him. "You never done it, did you?"

"I was in my office all night," Hammond said.

The sheriff turned to Dave. "And you was in bed, wasn't you? Rand can prove that, and your sister and her husband."

"Sure," Dave said.

The sheriff shrugged and holstered his gun. "There. Now you start guessin'. I'm through."

Dave sank weakly on a bed and stared at Hammond. The guilt had been so obvious to them both that they stared at each other, trying to collect their wits. Dorsey was sobbing against the wall, and Dave, for the first time, noticed her. He blushed, but said nothing.

Hammond put his hand out to Dorsey and she fell on her knees, sobbing on his chest.

"I reckon we're a couple of fools," Hammond said quietly.

Dave nodded.

"There, there," Hammond said, patting Dorsey's shoulder.

"Oh, Dad," she sobbed. "They might have killed you. They might have shot you."

"And I might have shot them," Hammond said.

Dorsey looked up, her face streaked with tears. "But you're an old man. In bed. Without a gun." She looked at Dave and her eyes were bitter with scorn. "Is that a trick you learned in jail? Killing defenseless and innocent men?"

"Stop it, honey," Hammond said.

Dave flushed, but his eyes flashed. "I reckon I didn't think of that, ma'm. It was whoever got a gun first."

"And dad with a broken ankle!" Dorsey flared up.

"I didn't know that either," Dave said.

"You contemptible, sneaking jailbirds!" Dorsey said, then started to cry again.

Hammond looked at Dave. "I reckon she's upset and don't know what she's sayin'."

Dave nodded and reached with trembling hands for his sack of Durham. Rosy sat beside him and cuffed his Stetson off his forehead. He was scowling fiercely, looking at Hammond occasionally. The sheriff took a chair against the wall and sat down. Dorsey soon straightened up and wiped her eyes. Her eyes were cold as she turned to Dave.

"I—I guess I lost my temper," she said. "I'm sorry."

"That's all right," Dave said quietly. "There may be a lot of truth in what you said."

Again Dorsey flushed, but held her tongue.

"Mr. Hammond," Rosy began, "I reckon we owe apologies all around. We've all been barkin' up the wrong tree. Let's get together and try and settle this."

Hammond smiled and the warm gleam of humor came into his eyes. "That's sense. Whoever owned that lake, it won't do them much good now. I reckon all cause for our fightin' is over."

Dave nodded glumly. "We're in the same boat. The spread ain't worth the grass on it now, and your mine is just a pot-hole, from the looks of it."

"And it'll stay that way," Hammond said. "I couldn't raise the money to have the water pumped out of it."

DAVE smoked in silence a moment, then looked at Hammond. "All this knocks me into a cocked hat. I thought you'd set Freeman onto me because you wanted that water and thought you could bully it out of sis." He smiled a little. "You see, Mr. Hammond, I didn't know much about you. Reckon that'll

teach me not to think the worst of people."

Hammond nodded. "I was as much to blame as you, Turner."

"But who could have done it?" Rosy said. "Some one did. Was they wantin' to ruin you, Hammond, or us?"

"Did you two know any one in jail that might have wanted to get even with you?" Dorsey asked.

Rosy glared at the sheriff, who looked sternly back at him.

"You needn't look at me that way, Rand," the sheriff said. "I ain't even opened my mouth."

Rosy turned to Dorsey. "The sheriff asked that yesterday. I'll tell you what I told him. No."

"Then who could it have been if it wasn't that?" Dorsey asked. Rosy shrugged, and got up. He hitched up his belt. "Dave and me don't know many people around here. Dave's been away eight years. I'm new. It looks like some one wanted to run you off that mine, Hammond—clean off. You got any enemies you think might do it?"

"The only enemies I've got are people I owe money to," Hammond said, smiling. "And I don't think they'd want to cut off the chances of gettin' paid back."

"No one else?" Rosy persisted. "Haven't you had any fights, good hatin' fights, durin' your life?"

Hammond shook his head. "Closest I ever come to a fight was this time, I reckon. I know people that don't like me and I don't like. Like Pearson, for instance. But that's nacheral enough."

"Sure. What about Pearson?" Rosy asked. "Ain't he the banker?"

Hammond nodded. "We were almost partners once. I got the Draw Three on a tip from a minin' man I did a favor for once. I was ranching about a hundred miles to the south, then, and I sold my spread and come up here. I didn't have enough money to swing the deal, so I tried to borrow money from Pearson. I had the option bought up, but I had to get the money to swing the deal. He wouldn't have anything to do with it at first, but he finally sent east for a minin' man to come and look the property over. I never heard what the minin' man said about it, but Pearson come around and wanted to buy up my option when it expired. I told him I wouldn't sell, and that if I couldn't get the money to mine it myself, I was goin' to sell the option to a minin' company."

Hammond grinned, as if remembering something.

"Well, that brought Pearson around. He agreed to put some money in it. We started work and Pearson was all for sinkin' a lot of money in it first thing. Open it up wide. I was for payin' as we went. Pearson kept puttin' money in until I tumbled to what he was tryin' to do. He was tryin' to put so much money in it that he'd get control. Loan me out of the mine, so to speak. Well, I set my foot down. Pearson didn't like it, and he hasn't been around since."

"Think he's forked?" Rosy asked.

"No," Hammond said immediately. "I don't think so. He's a sharp business man, is all. He wanted the mine. He tried to get it in a legitimate way. He couldn't and we disagreed." He looked at Rosy. "That often happens that business partners don't agree."

"Sure," Rosy said. "And some of his money is still in it?"

"Plenty."

"Then that's out, on that score alone. He wouldn't want to lose his own money," Rosy said.

"He wouldn't do it, anyway," Hammond said.

"Well, that leaves us about where we were, don't it?" Rosy said. "Can you think of any one else?"

Hammond shook his head. "No. I reckon the rest of the town hasn't got anything against me. Not enough to want to ruin me, anyway."

"Well, you're ruined right enough,

Buck," the sheriff said. "You'll never work that mine again without puttin' in a lot of money."

"I know it," Hammond said glumly.

Dorsey patted her father's arm. "Dad, why buck it? Sell out. Sell out to Crowell. Take that offer he made you this morning and buy the ranch back."

Dave leaned forward, his eyes staring strangely. "Sell out to who?" he asked.

"Crowell," Dorsey said. "He's been interested in the mine. He happened to be in town last night and when he heard about the accident, he came over this morning and wanted dad to sell to him."

Dave looked at Rosy and back to Hammond. "Crowell, you say? Then you folks aren't Crowell?"

"I don't know what you mean," Dorsey said, puzzled.

"You—" Dave began, then looked at Rosy. He shook himself and leaned forward, talking rapidly. "Listen to this. For the past year, Mary, my sister, has been gettin' letters from a gent by the name of Crowell, askin' her to put a price on the D Bar T spread. Those letters came about the time she was havin' that trouble with you, Hammond, over the lake. She thought it was you writin' the letters under the name of Crowell. She thought that you were so sure that you couldn't win the lake in a court fight that you were tryin' to buy it secretly. Under another name, that is, because Mary figured you thought she wouldn't sell to you if she knew it was you that was tryin' to buy the place. And you folks didn't write the letters at all?"

"No," Hammond said.

"And you didn't have this Crowell try to buy the D Bar T for you?"

"You know how much money I've got, Turner. I couldn't buy it."

Dave slapped his knee. "Then that's the *hombre!* Where is he?"

"I still don't see," Hammond said slowly.

"Why, he's the only man we know that wants both our spread and your mine," Dave said excitedly. "He's the only jasper that we know of. Chances are it was him that blew out the lake hoping he could buy both places after the water was gone. Don't you see?"

"Where is he now?" Rosy cut in.

"Gone," Hammond said. "He took the morning train out. He—"

"Gone?" Dave said, half risen off the bed. He sank back again and said: "Go on. What about him?"

"He come in here around seven o'clock, about ten minutes before the train went, and made me an offer for the mine. Said he just come on a hunch, after he'd found out what happened."

Rosy broke in. "What did he look like?"

Hammond thought a moment before replying. "Short, dark. Got a thin face and dark eyes. Wears dark clothes, city clothes. Got a funny habit of lookin' at your tie or your collar. Don't weigh more'n a hundred an' thirty. Why?" he asked. "You seen him?"

"Huh-uh," Rosy grunted. He stood and spoke to the sheriff. "Hank, wire his description down the line. Have him yanked off that train an' held for you."

The sheriff shook his head. "Wires is down after that storm last night. I tried to get through this mornin'."

Rosy groaned.

"But he's the ranny," Dave said emphatically. "It's the only way this whole thing makes sense."

Rosy rammed his hands in his pockets and paced the floor, smoking furiously. Suddenly he turned on Hammond and Dave.

"And he'll be back," Rosy said decisively, "if I got this figgered out right. First place, he thinks that you, Dave, and Hammond each think the other blowed the lake out. He's countin' on you fightin' on sight, or anyway not talkin' together peaceable like this. He don't think you'll be calm enough to talk it

over. Second place, he hasn't seen Mary about the ranch. About her half of it anyway, and he'll come back and try to buy it from her. He'll come back to you, too, Hammond and try to buy the mine again. He'll be back, all right, and if I ain't loco, he'll be back right *pronto*. While he thinks you and Dave are fightin' mad and when everything looks hopeless. He'll be back and he'll be back with cash!"

Hammond was visibly excited now. He looked around on a side table, then asked Dorsey:

"Get my pipe, will you honey?"

Dorsey went to the closet and opened the door. Hammond's clothes were inside and Dorsey fumbled around in his coat pocket. Rosy idly noted that Hammond wore half-boots, the tracks of which could not possibly jibe with the track he had seen up by the lake. And Hammond was smoking a pipe too, not tailor-made cigarettes.

"Hanged if I don't think you've got it," he said finally.

"And that ain't all," Rosy said, still pacing the floor. "There's somethin' behind this we don't understand. For instance, how could Crowell have been around these parts and kept hidden long enough to drill them holes for the dynamite? There was lots of them, and in hard rock."

"He couldn't," Hammond said.

Rosy looked at him a long time.

"That tell you anything?"

Hammond puffed savagely on his pipe.

"Lots," he said briefly, holding Rosy's glance.

"Right," Rosy said. "It means that Crowell ain't done the dynamitin' at all. It was done by some one he hired, some understrappers that could travel around in this country and not be noticed much."

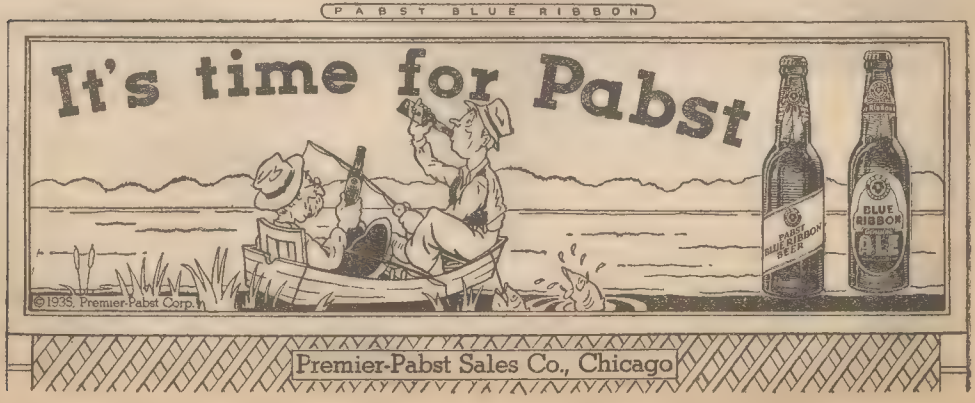
Rosy paused in his pacing and leaned on the bed, looking at the three men.

"Gents, we've walked into somethin' that'll take a lot of blowin' up. I aim to start right now. There's tracks up there at that lake. We never looked for 'em, but there must be. We was so sure it was you, Hammond, that we never looked much. They'll be washed out bad, but we may pick up somethin'. I'm hittin' for the lake. You comin', Dave?"

Dave rose, and so did the sheriff.

"I dunno when we'll be back, Hammond," Rosy said. "Maybe not for days. But if this *hombre* Crowell shows up again, you string him along. You don't have to do anything except cuss Dave Turner and put off sellin' your mine to him. Tell him you're considerin' it." He grinned. "This has got the makin's of a first-rate chunk of hell."

(*To be continued*)



GONE NATIVE

By Walt Peachy

IT WAS late afternoon in Chiriqui, Panama. Low in the west the sun was a glowing orange ball that changed the bright green blades of the banana plants into deep olive. The distant mountains were banks of blue and purple shadows, set off by nearer green hills and the low-lying clouds.

The seven men in the Ironia Engineering Camp of the National Fruit Company, composed of three camp cars and a combination cook and mess car, had come out of their rooms to sit where the little breeze that had sprung up, rustling the banana leaves and clearing the heat deadened air, would strike them and cool them off while they waited for supper.

Gomez, the native cook, announced that the meal was ready by beating with a soup spoon on an angle bar which he had found along the track.

After supper they all went to sit on the little porch which had been built along one of the cars. The most enjoyable hours of the day were spent there, where they had chairs, a card table and an icebox, usually well stocked with cool Balboa beer.

Lee Jackson was the oldest man in camp, lean, deeply tanned, with lively blue eyes and a gift for story-telling. As many years as he had spent in the tropics would have soured most men—would have made them tight-lipped and glum.

They were discussing one of their number who had gone to his room. Some one had remarked that he was undoubt-

edly the damnedest liar in the world.

"Go slow on your judgments," interrupted Lee, carefully filling his pipe, "I once knew a fellow named Jensen in Brazil—"

"Wait a minute!" One of the men dashed for the icebox, returning with his arms full of beer bottles which he deposited on the floor; then, unloading his pockets of a dozen packages of cigarettes, he seated himself comfortably.

"When Lee gets to remembering Brazil," he said, "it generally takes all night."

Lee Jackson had been about everywhere in the tropics, so when he felt like telling of things he had seen the boys listened.

He tamped the tobacco in his pipe, held a match to it, gave a few draws and threw the match away.

IT was about six years ago, he began. I was working for the Brazilian Concessions Rubber Company in the Rio Negro Division. The main offices of the division were at Manaos, a small shipping centre at the juncture of the Rio Negro and the Amazon River.

There was a sort of branch office and a company hotel in a dirty, evil-smelling village of mud huts and mud streets, Muirapinina, about a hundred miles up the Rio Negro from Manaos. The hotel called itself La Casa Grande—The Big House—but you could have stuck your arm in any one of the windows and unlatched every door in it.

Our camp was seventy miles up the river from Muirapinina, and thirty miles east into the jungle. That was a jungle! Trees a hundred feet high, almost all mahogany and *cerolia*. Dense thick underbrush growing out of low swampy soil, so that before we ran our first lines, and made a clearing, you couldn't go ten feet without cutting your way with a machete. It was a great country for rubber, though, and we found many stands of old trees.

We had gone there on exploration; but our reports were so favorable that the company sent up materials, and orders to establish a permanent camp; and to sectionize a piece of land twenty miles square. Then we were to take topography over the whole thing—one level shot every hundred feet in both directions.

We brought in a whole lot of native laborers and their women to cut our lines, and to do the clearing. They built themselves a village about half a mile from camp. Supplies were packed in by mules from the river.

The order had said that it was to be a permanent camp, so we built our houses out of the native mahogany, cut into thick planks. A good thing we did.

One house, about fifteen by twenty, was for the project engineer and the camp office; and two houses, having four by ten rooms in line, were for us. There was a small cook shack and dining room—just four posts driven into the ground, a tin roof, and screening to keep the bugs out. Then they sent us a lot of dynamite to store for the farmers who were to clear the land as soon as our topography was taken; but the farmers never came, so we stored it in a little tin shack about a hundred yards from the houses.

In front of the camp we cleared a space for two hundred feet to the pack road. On the other three sides there was only a fifty-foot clearing.

That's all there was. Just a little cleared dot in the vast green jungle, pulsing with life in its everlasting struggle. The ground was a network of animal trails, and the trees were full of monkeys and great, colorful birds. It was cool and still in the daytime, under the shade of the big trees, but at night—God, what a din! All kinds of sounds from the tiny shrills of the insects to

the long, fierce howl of the South American tiger.

There were seven of us in camp when Jensen came. All tropical men, more or less of a type, except young Jameson, a levelman who was soft. He shouldn't have been there. The other six of us were the kind of men you see everywhere down in these countries. Dixon and Roberts were Southerners, tall, hard men, both of them, with brown skin, brown eyes and straight mouths. Dixon was getting his first gray hairs. He was morose too, and quiet; but Roberts, the younger man, liked a joke.

They were both fine field men. Klein was a German—had been an army man. He was short and broad, with the usual blue eyes and yellow hair. Klein wasn't too good in the field; but he could take a piece of paper and pencil and tell you how many bottle caps it would take to go to the moon along a sine curve. Kyle was a young, hot-tempered Texan. He had no patience with the natives; but he forgot that you can't treat Brazilian bushmen as you treat Mexican peons. I'll tell you more about Kyle later.

Jensen came down to Brazil like the rest of us in camp, as an engineer. He was an American of Danish parents, and a graduate of some school in the Northwest—North Dakota—I think. He was an odd-looking fellow until you got used to seeing him around. He was about five feet eight, with great shoulders and a little head. His yellow hair stood straight up. Convenient, he said, because he didn't have to comb it. There wasn't any use. He had bright blue eyes that stood out like lights, after he got his tan, a turned-up nose, and a wide mouth that was always grinning. That is, at first. He was long-waisted and short-legged, so that when he walked fast, as he usually did, he looked as though he were going to sit down. You'd see his sun helmet bob up and down as he struck out through the bush, as if it was part of a shooting gallery—hit it while it's up, you know. But he could walk all day and never mind it.

He did his work, stayed sober and sat around every night writing letters to a yellow-haired girl in the States—Greta Johansen, her name was. We rode him about it considerably, but he just grinned. What can we do with a fellow like that?

Well, Jensen got along all right for about six months. Then the letters he'd been getting from the girl must have stopped coming. I don't know just when, but we noticed him hanging around the cook shack with us in the evening, looking glum. He didn't have anything to say but he would answer if he were spoken to.

After about a month passed he shut up altogether. Of course I don't know what happened at home, but I could guess. I've seen it happen before. There was a song, "You Went Away Too Far, and You Stayed Away Too Long!" Well, I took it that one of the local boys had talked Jensen's girl into marriage. He never let on that anything was wrong, except that he looked like a professional mourner at the sultan's funeral.

One of the boys called him the "Melancholy Dane" once and it stuck. He didn't care. He wouldn't have cared if the roof had fallen in on him.

Jensen never drank, as I said, just a sociable nip now and then. We used to throw a bender every week-end regularly, and sometimes another one about Wednesday night, but he never joined us.

Now it began to look as though he was just before falling off the wagon. He took to snooping around in the corner of the cook shack among the cases, and coming up with a bottle, which he'd carry off to his room. That was all right, only we had to order a lot more whiskey. We figured it wouldn't hurt him and we wanted to get him over this melancholy business. We began to get tired of seeing him going around looking

like something that had died and forgot to fall down.

WE GOT him over it all right. Yes, sir, the treatment was a complete success. It wasn't long till he started ordering about as much whiskey for himself as we did for the rest of the camp. We could hear little songs and laughter and conversations from his room till early in the morning. The funny thing about those conversations was that there was no one in the room with him—at that time. He had long talks with himself. He would give himself a lot of good advice and then explain to himself why he couldn't follow it out. Then he'd have a heated argument with himself. He sure did some energetic forgetting! In two months he had forgot that there had ever been a yellow-haired girl in the world. But, of course, he was neglecting his work.

Then Milton, the project engineer, told him to start tapering off. Milton was from Massachusetts, about forty-five years old, with a long, solemn face, and legs like stilts. He was a good engineer, but an awful grouch. He never got tanned—didn't like the tropics—shouldn't have been there; but instead of leaving he decided to stick it out, and became a pain to everybody. I don't think Milton ever made a mistake in his work, and if any one else did he caught a look out of those steely blue eyes that chilled his marrow. And he heard plenty, too—biting sarcasm.

Jensen did stop drinking enough so that he could go to work every day. He liked work, somehow, and he was beginning to learn enough of their mixture of Indian and Portuguese so that he could enjoy talking to his boys; his rodmen, chainmen and machete-men.

We had an odd sort of native there, more Indian than anything else, and only a few of them would work or have anything to do with the white men. Those who did work submitted to us because they could buy women and *guara*, the native firewater, with their pay. It was a sort of armed truce.

It wasn't long before we began to miss our melancholy Dane at night. We found, upon inquiring among the men, that he would slip over to the village to talk and drink with the natives. We explained, the best we could, the danger of white men associating intimately with natives; how, before long, in his frame of mind, he would want to live with them and be one of them; but that was never quite possible, for we can't change our race at will.

He said: "All right, if you're so particular I'll see what I can do."

He did. A few nights later we heard soft voices and giggles from Jensen's room; and we knew that he'd figured that if he couldn't go over to the village, he could bring the village to camp—or what he wanted of it—

We couldn't allow him to have a native woman in his room, so Milton had to tell him to get rid of her. We had no moral objection, but our control over the natives was weak enough at best, and if they knew that we permitted one of their native women to live with one of us, they would soon be taking all sorts of liberties. They would think that if they were good enough to make love to, they were our equals—and of course they would be right in that. So Jensen's woman had to go.

It took him a long time to see it. He kept muttering about white people being hypocritical. He said that the natives were honest; they took a man at his face value, as a man, regardless of his color. And—well, if he had to choose, he would quit and go live with the natives.

It wasn't very long until he had to choose. In a week the woman was back in his room. I couldn't blame him so very much, because she was a lot finer than most native women. Small and neat, she was, and brown, of course,

but smooth and beautifully made. I saw her once with Jensen, following right at his heels; and the way she looked at him out of her great brown eyes was too much to watch. The sun rose and set for her white man, and she was going to keep him.

Oh, yes, she kept him, though she got him fired to do it. He wouldn't move her out of his room; so one morning Milton told him he had better pack his clothes and go to Manaos to get his money and a ticket to the States. Milton had sent a letter to the chief engineer at Manaos two days before.

Jensen stood there a minute, then he took a deep breath and looked all about him, at the green jungle, and at the sky. Then he said, "Milton, I'm glad I'm fired. I've been through for months. Sure I'll pack and move—glad to—and I'll get my money, if I ever get down Manaos way. But you can take that ticket to the States out to that little house yonder, and hang it on the wall with the rest of the paper. I wouldn't go near the States! I know some people who are square. They may not be white—but, well. . . . Sure I'll go. I'll go where I'm wanted—where I have friends. And I'll stay. I don't want to see or hear any of you again. I don't want you to remember me as one of you—not even as one of your race, because I won't be. You despise these natives, but you also fear them. And if I were you I wouldn't forget that.

Poor Jensen! I don't think he knew what he was doing. I never felt bitter toward him, as Milton did, for what happened. He didn't speak another word in camp after what he said to Milton.

After that speech Milton just stood there and stared at him. I'd never known Milton to be at loss for words before, nor have I since, but there he stood, speechless. The color rose to his cheeks, his mouth became a hard line, and he suddenly turned on his heel and walked into the office. He came back, though, to give Jensen his letter to the chief engineer, and his pay slip. Jensen packed up and moved. By evening, when we returned from work, he was gone.

WE didn't see him for about eight months, but we heard a lot about him. He was always moving. He went from one native town to another, and to as many native camps as he could. It was said that he was organizing them. He always lived as the natives lived: barefooted, half-clothed, dog-dirty, with his face wreathed in a tangle of yellow hair and beard. He ate with them, drank with them, lived with them as one of themselves; and his woman was always with him. It was obvious from what followed that, whether or not he was totally responsible, or whether or not he did it intentionally, he stirred up a great deal of ill feeling against the white men in that district.

Some one, it may have been Jensen, and it may not, was responsible for a lot of rifles and ammunition getting into the hands of natives. It is said that a disappointed presidential candidate was trying to start a nation-wide revolution, and that the rifles came through him, in return for a promise to join his revolutionary army. I don't know. Nothing much ever came of the revolution; but you can't imagine any native having a rifle and letting it sit in a corner and get rusty, can you? Well, they didn't. We became very much aware of the existence of those rifles.

Long before we had reports of Jensen's activities, we felt that something was wrong, because the natives became increasingly difficult to handle. Cases of insubordination were frequent, we fired men only when it was absolutely necessary, and we tried to be as lenient as we could. We took the discord as part of our work in such a place; and we were never really conscious of what was

going on, until it all happened. That was the day that Kyle disappeared.

I told you, I think, a little about Kyle—or did I? Well, anyway, he was worse than that. And in addition to being hot-tempered, he was a little fellow. Have you noticed how a lot of little guys always go around with a chip on their shoulders? It's funny, but they do—till somebody flattens them out. Some of them get away with it for years. Kyle was that way even with us, but with the natives he acted as though he thought he was a special deputy of the Lord Himself. You can't do that with some natives. They're men, or think they are, and it's best to kind of get that idea too. Right through all this trouble that we felt brewing, Kyle made no effort to understand the men—just kept on treating them like dirt. Then one evening he didn't turn up.

We waited awhile, then we all went out to look for him. We were more afraid of finding him than not. We knew where to look, because Milton had told him to run out a ditch profile in Section 42.

It was almost dark when we found Kyle. I shall never forget how he looked as we almost ran against him, in the deep dusk. He had been beaten and cut with machetes until he was hardly recognizable as anything human. Then he had been tied with grapevines to a post which the natives had driven right in the middle of the section line, so that we couldn't miss seeing him.

It was an open declaration of war. We all knew that none of the men would come to work the next morning; but we weren't so sure that they wouldn't come to the camp; and it would pay us to be ready for them.

There was nothing to do but cut poor Kyle down and bring him in. We would have to do what we could to make him look better; and leave him in his room until we found out what the natives meant to do. Then, if there were any of us left, we could make a box and bury him.

Milton figured that it was a general native uprising and that our play was to hold out against them as well as we could, until help came from Manaos or from Muirapinina. He reasoned that it would be best to stay in camp, because we would have cover. If we started for the river we might meet some bad natives, where there'd be nothing to get behind.

You fellows would be surprised to find how much better it feels to be behind something in a rifle fight.

Lee stopped for a drink. We all took some beer and rolled the bottles along the floor, where they clinked against the other dead soldiers lying in the corner around the empty bottle barrel. It was a lot cooler. After a while Lee hitched himself comfortably in his chair and went on.

IT WAS dark when we got what was left of Kyle together and covered up in his room. Then we yelled for the cook because it was late and we were hungry. We might as well have called for the company agent in Rio to come and cook our supper, for the little Santiago had high-tailed for the village, where I reckon he thought he'd be safer. We opened a few cans of stuff and made a pot of the old jamochey, so it would seem like a meal.

When we had finished eating, we moved a lot of food and four or five gallon jars of water over into Milton's house. Then we moved blankets in and spent the greater part of the night getting the house ready to withstand a siege.

The walls were thick enough to hold out against rifle fire, but the doors were thin, so we nailed the top of the desk onto one of them, and the drafting board onto the other. We had three kerosene lamps lit, and it was all we could do to keep from kicking them

over. It was close quarters, but it was the safest place we could get. And hot! We stripped down to the waist, and even then we sizzled.

We threw Milton's bed and one chair out into the yard to make room. Then we cut two loopholes in each wall, close to the floor, so that we could shoot lying down, in order to clear the windows. We barred the doors, and made some wedges that could be hammered into the cracks of the doors, to hold them if it became necessary. That was all we had to do, except for cleaning and oiling what artillery we had.

Milton stationed us. There wasn't much stationing to do, with only half a dozen of us left—Jensen gone and Kyle killed. Then, too, we only had four rifles big enough to do any good. Jameson had brought some sort of little .22 caliber squirrel rifle along with him, if you can imagine that. But the two who were to be without rifles had their choice of a number of the heavy .45 caliber pistols, with plenty of ammunition.

Roberts was given the back of the house, facing a part of the bush which was fairly clear, and dotted with trees. No telling what direction they'd attack from.

Dixon was put on the side facing our bunkhouses and a good deal of cleared land. Klein drew the side facing the heaviest bush, and the path that we usually used to go to work. Milton and I split the front of the house, facing the biggest cleared area, and the pack road to the river. Jameson was to stay in the middle of the room to pass out food and ammunition, and to relieve any one who was hurt. The plan of defense being all set, we lay down on the floor to await attack, or morning, or whatever was coming.

Klein woke us up about five o'clock by dropping one of his boots, which he had taken off, to make his "feedt feel gooter." We had all gone to sleep, though we hadn't intended to. "Hereafter," Milton snapped, "there'll be watches!"

Young Jameson was getting nervous. He mumbled something about wishing those damn fools would either come to work or start shooting; and that this waiting around to get shot at was driving him goo-goo; and that he wanted a drink.

Milton said, "Yeah, the hell you say! You'd better bust out some breakfast for us, and when you get that done, you'd better wait till evening. You know what drinking in the daytime does around here; and we need everybody sober—even you. If you can't help you can stay out of the way better when you're sober."

That little speech seemed to quiet Jameson down; and he got us a pile of canned corned-beef hash sandwiches, and some coffee left from the night before, for breakfast. We had brought a few dishes from the cook shack, but we decided not to use them, because we didn't have enough water to go into the laundry business.

Just then Roberts said to be quiet, because he thought he heard something moving around in the bush.

Jameson almost shrieked. "God, I wonder if—"

He didn't get any further, because Milton yelled, "Don't you wonder anything, Half-Baked—and listen, Roberts, don't go cracking down on anything till we are sure that they mean to attack. If we can talk ourselves out of this, we'll have a better chance of sending this infant back to his mother in one piece. Let them shoot first, then open up on 'em. But remember—don't just make a noise—aim carefully. We haven't all the ammunition in the world, and we don't know how long we'll be here. If the attack is from any one side the rest of us will move over to that side."

I reckon I was getting a little excited myself, about then, because I missed a hole in the floor by two inches, after I'd been spitting through it all morning.

THEN, as if by a prearranged signal, they attacked from two sides at once. From the front where Milton and I were, and from Dixon's side, facing the bunkhouses, came a fusilade of scattered shooting. We couldn't see any one to shoot back at; but there was a lot of shouting, mostly in the Indian dialect. Their aim was terrible. Only a few bullets hit anywhere close to the loopholes. Others hit wide, or high on the house, and some even clanked on the tin roof.

Dixon said something about those guys not being able to hit the ground with their hats, as he opened fire at a moving bush; and Klein said, "Ya, I t'ink ve safe, if ve stay put in vun place."

But they steadied down. It wasn't long until we heard the solid *thwack* of bullets pretty well all over the two attacked sides of the house. Roberts moved over to the other loophole to help Dixon; and Klein came to the door between Milton and me and opened the door a little and wedged it so he could shoot out of it, if the natives showed themselves.

Then all the natives must have got excited, because about fifty of them started running across the clearing toward us. Maybe that's all there were of them; I don't know. They'd run a little way, then stop, wave their rifles and yell some awful insults and shoot standing up. That was fine! They made perfect targets. Before they decided they weren't making any headway and started back to the bush, we had six of them stretched out on our side and Roberts and Dixon had three lying down and one hanging over a stump. We may have winged a few more but we couldn't tell in the confusion.

The firing went on from the cover of the jungle; I guess they thought they could shoot through the sides of the house. But those mahogany planks were bullet-proof, except for the loopholes. Then there was a lull which gave us a breathing spell. Dixon wanted to know if we had all that outfit on our payroll.

"Not half of them," said Milton. "This has been organized if you're asking me, and I think I know who did us the favor of stirring these half-wits up!"

We all knew, but we hated to think that any one would go back on his own people to that extent. We weren't as angry at Jensen as we should have been, I guess, because we liked him. Still, if we'd happen to catch sight of him among our attackers his chances of getting back to his native woman would have been slim.

Just before noon they made another rush. This time there seemed to be more of them, tearing across the clearing again, shooting as they ran, and yelling. One thing they yelled was "*Mate los puercos blancos!* Kill the white pigs!" So you can see they were really peeved. But they got only a little more than halfway across when they decided again to go back and think it over. We kept our guns hot blazing away at anything coffee-colored, and some of them didn't get back. They kept dropping on one knee to load and empty their rifles at us.

There was a let-up of the noise in the room—curiously enough we'd all had to reload at the same time—and we heard a low moan. Jameson was stooping down, his hands clenched, saying, half between a whisper and a cry. "Oh, God! Dixon's hit!"

Dixon had rolled away from the loophole where he lay, breathing heavily. Then, in a throaty whisper he said, "Don't stand there sucking your thumb, Jameson. Get in my place and do some good." That Dixon had plenty of nerve.

Jameson relieved Dixon, but pretty soon the natives were back in the bush and the firing stopped as suddenly as it had begun. They were having another council of war or something.

We fixed Dixon up the best we could, which was poor, because the bullet had

entered just in front of his left shoulder and had penetrated in a downward and backward direction, so that it was lodged about halfway to his waist, near his back. He moaned for a while, then fell asleep on a pile of blankets where we had put him. His face was drawn and that gray-yellow color that people who are deeply tanned get, when they are hurt. We couldn't quite stop the bleeding.

There was no more attack until about four o'clock in the afternoon. Then we wanted them to attack! We wanted to see one of them long enough to fill him full of holes; and we wanted, more than anything else, to see Jensen. We would make him melancholy enough to hold him for a long time.

We were ready to fight all the natives in Brazil. We didn't say much about it, but it was all in our eyes. Even Jameson had worked up a little anger through his fear. Dixon had died.

At two o'clock he waked up and began to cough. Choked, weak coughs, they were, and heart-rending. You see there was nothing we could do for him. We didn't even have an opiate to give him. He weakened rapidly, and at about two-thirty a slight trickle of blood began to come from the side of his mouth. It leaked from his lungs, I guess. Shortly afterward he died, very quietly, with a shudder and a little sigh.

We put a blanket over him and said a few things about—you know, what a good fellow he'd been, and all.

I guess the time between Dixon's death and the attack was the hardest of all. There we were with Dixon, and our thoughts, and there was nothing to do but sit and wait. To have run out of the house after them would have been sheer suicide; and there was no way to make them attack us. We had to wait until they did it in their own sweet time.

About four o'clock we noticed a lot of quiet moving about in the bush. We saw several natives jump quickly from tree to tree, beyond the clearing. Milton and I shot at them, but that was all. They were keeping well covered, because they had had a practical demonstration of the celebrated American marksmanship; and we had made believers out of them, I guess.

THERE was no more rushing. We wished there had been, because now they were taking careful aim, and shooting uncomfortably close to our loopholes. We took to getting to one side for a while, getting all ready, shooting a magazine full, then getting away again. A few bullets came into the house, and their solid, reverberating "plunk" against the wall wasn't what you'd call music to the ear. No, sir! Our ammunition wasn't lasting as well as we had expected it to, and, just generally speaking, if we were making any progress it was backward. Things couldn't go on so very much longer this way. If they kept shooting at us from long range, and refusing to attack, we were sunk.

Then Klein got winged in the shooting arm. Not seriously, but it took some washing and bandaging. All the while not a grunt out of him, not even when we poured iodine into the place. But he couldn't shoot left-handed very well, and it exposed him more, because he had to leave the door farther open.

At five o'clock things were worse. Two of the water jars in the corner had been broken; and Milton got a small scalp wound. We were all thinking that they might attack soon; and have a chance of getting through to us. Any way you took it we were sunk. I guess they didn't know it, which was a help, but you could have bought our chances from any of us for a nickel, on credit.

We didn't think of what would happen to any of us who might be captured alive. We didn't have to. We remembered poor Kyle, and how he looked when we took him down off that post.

With startling suddenness there came

a frenzied knocking at the back door. A voice said brokenly, "Open up! Hurry—I'm a target out here!"

We hesitated for a fraction of a minute. We knew that voice. Then again: "For God's sake! I've come thirty miles through the bush—to help you!"

Milton got to his feet, shrugged his shoulders, and saying. "It would be plain inhuman to leave him out there," unbarred the door.

Jensen, half fell into the room, and leaned panting against the back wall. He was dirtier than ever. He had been scratched by thorns and his arms and feet were bleeding in places. Milton rebarred the door.

Nobody spoke.

Jensen took a long shuddering breath and said: "If you boys want to shoot me, I guess I've got it coming. It may be that I started all this—talking too much to the natives—I don't know. Maybe I was a little crazy when I left you—because, about three months ago, I woke up, all at once, to what was happening."

All the while he was talking we had to listen with our faces turned away, because we had to keep on shooting. It was just as well. I don't think any of us wanted to look at him.

He went on: "When I discovered how excited the natives were—that they wanted to kill all the foreigners, I tried to reason with them—to show them that foreign enterprises gave them work—made living easier and all that—it was no use. The flame had been lighted—it's got to be put out—now! Government troops coming to kill them didn't bother them—and they had me there, because some one trying to organize a revolution had given them guns—they weren't afraid of government troops.

"I saw then. I was desperately sorry—" he talked with an effort—so it hurt you, "because it came home to me then, *hard* that one *can't* change races at will, countries, perhaps—but not races. I didn't give up trying to check the tide until yesterday, when in a village near Muirapinina I learned that the natives here were going to attack you. No boat would run, so I left my horse. I traveled all night, and when the horse couldn't go any farther—about nine this morning, I left him and came the rest of the way by foot—I want to help you out of this—if you'll let me!"

Milton said something then, that however justified, I didn't like. He pointed to where Dixon lay under the blankets and said, "That little fire you mentioned having been lighted, Jensen, burned two of us. This is Dixon, and Kyle's over in the bunkhouse."

Of course Jensen had seen the form under the blankets, but now, as if against his will, he looked quickly, then as quickly away again. He stood staring at his feet. None of us said anything. What was there to say?

We could see how tired he was—he must have run a great way, and he was in earnest. His voice was broken and choked. Somehow, we couldn't hate the man.

We let him take Klein's place, because Klein's arm was hurting. He fought faithfully, until he jumped up with an exclamation. "Great Hell!" he shouted, "Why haven't some of you thought of it before? There's a way out of this! Milton, is that dynamite still in the shack back in the woods?"

Milton told him it was full, if that would help him any.

I reminded Jensen that we weren't in Central Park and asked him how he expected to get to the dynamite shack, and back, alive.

He said that if we could hold them from attacking until dark—about another half hour, he could get out there, or he thought he could, if we would let him try.

Milton turned to him and said: "Mister, we've taken about enough chances on you. This place is bad enough with-

out bringing dynamite into it. This isn't a suicide club—yet."

Jensen answered slowly: "I don't ask you to trust me, Milton. I guess I've lost the right to that; but this is your only chance. You can't hold out much longer. Somebody's got to get that dynamite. I'll go if you let me. I want to go. Then, too, whoever goes has to get through the natives, and I'm the only one here who knows the bush well enough for that. There is one other reason. If any one is killed, trying to get that dynamite, I think I should be the one—at least you'll agree on that. Won't you give me this chance to—kind of even up?"

WE poured hot fire into them until night, because we knew that if Jensen's plan didn't work, we wouldn't need our ammunition tomorrow. We had to prevent an attack; and we shot at the slightest suggestion of movement. The fight had told on us all. We were tired but we kept those rifles hot.

Perhaps they hoped to wait us out—to starve us out—or to attack next day, in better light, because as darkness fell, their fire lightened. At six o'clock, when it was almost dark, there was only an occasional shot.

Jameson opened some cans of soup and beans, which, with about a pound of cheese, made our supper. There was no way to make coffee, so we drank water. We didn't drink much, though, for the good reason that there wasn't much left.

When it was as dark as it would be—and we were glad there was no moon—Jensen unbarred the door, and after a long look at all of us, and a quick, hurt glance at Dixon's body, he slipped noiselessly out, and became a part of the darkness.

For what may have been a quarter of an hour, we fidgeted around. Roberts shifted one foot over the other, spat at a roach that was making for a corner and opined that while he wasn't sure about Jensen, with his short legs, as far as his own ability was concerned, he could have gone to the dynamite shack and back twice, wriggling on his belly backward.

He had scarcely finished when we heard the soft rap on the door which we had been expecting, and Roberts unbarred it to admit Jensen, who came in carrying a case of dynamite. He was dirtier than anything you've ever seen, unless you've been crawling around under mud tractors. Mud was plastered all down the front of him and his face was a fine study in soil composition.

"I had to play alligator both ways," he said. "They have sentries all around the house. I had to push this box of fireworks ahead of me on the back trip. I put a lot of fuse, and caps in my back pocket, so they are dry—I was waiting under a scrub *cedro* for a sentry to pass and he almost stepped on my hand."

Roberts found a machete for him so that he could scrape some of the mud off himself.

Milton, Roberts, Jameson and I stood two-hour watches from ten o'clock on during the night. If Jensen noticed that he wasn't given a watch, he said nothing. Milton was still doubtful—largely, I suspect, because of Jensen's parting words of eight months before. Milton was the sort who can't forget.

Jensen didn't sleep much that night. He was awake on my watch, from four to six. He must have felt that that was his last night. I honestly pitied him. He must have been clear off his head when he started all this ruckus. Men get like that down here, as most of you know—the jungle and monotony—and something on your mind—

At about six-thirty, when the light was good, we opened some cans of prunes and Vienna sausage and ate them, with the last of the bread, for breakfast. There was almost one cup of water left

for each of us. That was the last of the water.

Jensen opened the case of dynamite with a machete, and took out ten sticks. He shook the sawdust off them; opened one of them at the top with a pocket knife; and carefully imbedded a cap in it. A short fuse was attached to the cap. Then he put the stick in the middle of a bundle which he made of the other nine and wrapped it firmly with some thongs Milton had ordered for the measuring tapes. Then he said, "That, my friends, is a bomb."

He chuckled to himself as he prepared another, similar to the first. I had never seen Jensen so happy. He seemed vastly relieved, as if finally he knew a solution for the many complexities that had crowded into his life. When he had finished, he exhibited his bombs, smiling proudly, like a child with a new toy.

"These little fellows," he said, "are about to make a lot of noise, yes—and to undo a lot of harm." His eyes were always going furtively to where Dixon lay. Then, in a hushed voice, he said: "You can't know how I hope they'll work—they've *got* to work."

It was broad daylight by that time, yet the natives hadn't fired a single shot. Milton thought they were getting ready for their big rush. "They can guess that some of us are hurt," he said, "and that we can't have much food or ammunition left. When they come they'll figure on a clean-up."

"My plan," said Jensen, "is this: I want everybody to come to this side of the house, by the front door. When they attack I'll light these firecrackers and go out to meet them. If you cover me as much as you can with your fire, I'll have a better chance of getting to them. If I get close enough to throw, you won't need your ammunition; and if I don't, you haven't enough to hold out long anyhow; so when I go pour it into them."

It was another half hour before we saw a sign of them. Then, as suddenly as before, the whole jungle was echoing with reports; and they were running towards us, shooting, whooping and yelling all kinds of fancy curses; and coming from the same two sides. Experience didn't teach those smokes a thing!

"Now!" said Jensen, as he got a match ready to light the bombs. "We'll let them get as close as we can, then when I go, open up—and I guess I'd better say good-by—"

We hurriedly shook Jensen's hand; and Milton unbent enough to say: "You're doing a lot for us."

JENSEN'S reply was indistinct. He gulped something about thanks, and looked away. The rest of us were looking at the attacking natives, partly so we wouldn't have to watch Jensen. You know how we felt, I guess, because we knew that he was one of us, after all, and a man.

When the leaders of the attack were about seventy-five feet away—we let 'em keep coming without firing—he lit the bombs, and without a backward look, ran out of the house toward a point between the two groups. We gathered in the doorway and at the loopholes, and really heated up our guns.

For an instant, the natives hesitated. They must have thought him crazy. Then they came on—shooting at him. He half stumbled, seemed to wilt, then gathered himself together, and threw one bomb after the other, slowly and carefully so that one went into each group of frenzied natives. Then he sort of folded up, and fell on hands and knees, where he remained, swaying, until the two blasts came, almost simultaneously.

Our little house jumped as if it had been kicked, then leaned half off its pins.

We rushed out, shooting a few shots at the five or six natives who were able to limp or crawl towards the bush. It

was a terrible sight! Fully forty of them lying about; a few apparently only stunned, but most of them torn apart, or hopelessly mangled. Most of them were already dead, or dying. They were in a sort of circular pattern around the two shallow holes in the grounds, which were blown out by the explosions. Some of the poor fellows were blown as far as fifty feet. We shot most of them because it was the most merciful thing to do.

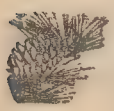
Jensen had been blown about ten feet from where he had fallen. He lay on his side, with his head turned, so that his face was on the ground. He breathed once in a long time, convulsively. When we took off his shirt we found four, small blue-tinged holes in his chest.

I'll always remember how he looked—so would any of you. He threw those things after he had stopped four rifle bullets!

The trouble lines smoothed themselves from his tanned dirt-streaked face; and when he died there was a suggestion of a smile about his mouth. I hope he found in death the peace that he lost in life.

I reckon that was all I was going to tell you boys about judging men slowly. Jensen was a thorough white man even when he thought he wasn't.

The company gave us a little vacation in Rio, which was nice while it lasted. It lasted, for me, about a week longer than they'd planned. Then one day I got sober and stayed that way long enough to quit and get me a job with a mining outfit in Chili.



WE hung around on the porch. The moon was shining so that we could look across the banana field to where the jungle started. I guess Lee was seeing another jungle—the little houses in the clearing—the grave he dug—

"Say," ventured one of the men, "there's something more to it, Lee. Tell us."

Lee hesitated.

I've felt it was a trust, he said, but you fellows understand. Here goes.

You see, I was the last one Jensen shook hands with. He pressed something in my hand—a soiled, creased letter. And gave me a long look and went out the door.

I read it after everything was cleaned up, that night. It was from her to him—the yellow-haired Swedish girl. She *did* marry somebody else—out of pique. Couldn't understand why he hadn't sent for her.

It had been a terrible mistake. She'd been bitterly unhappy. She stuck it out to punish herself, she said, but her husband had left her—been gone a year.

"If you'll only let me come there to you," she wrote, "I'd go anywhere to you—stay anywhere. Forgive me and let me come," she begged.

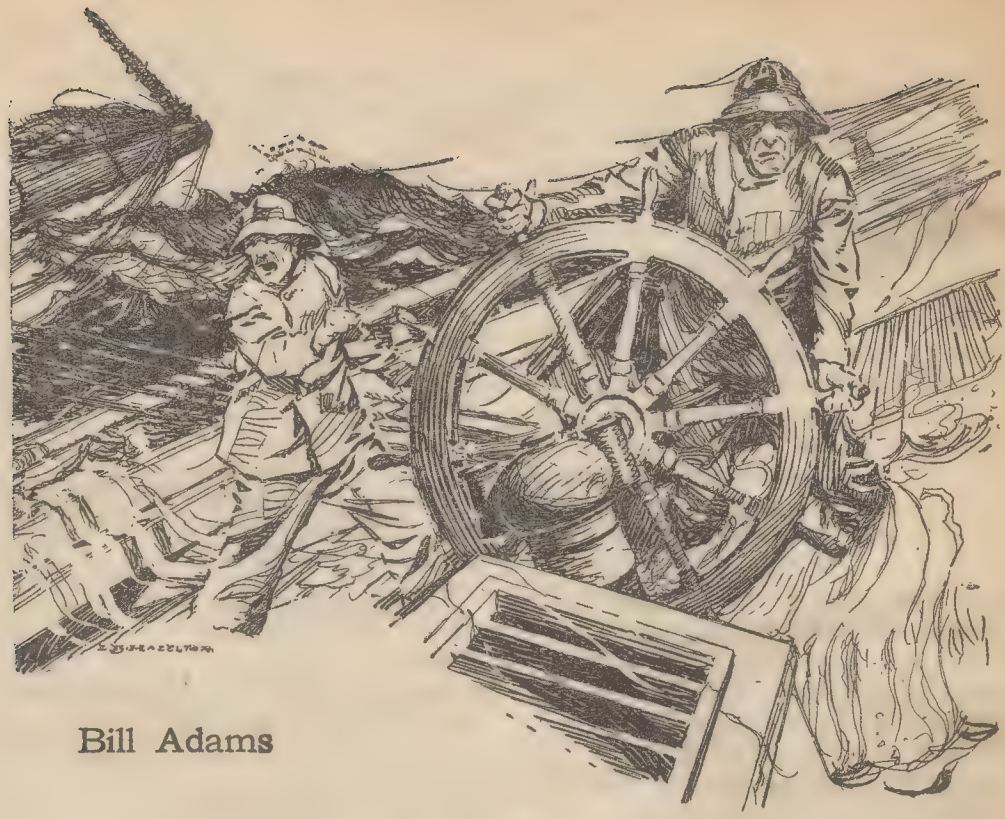
Jensen could have had her; and he'd never stopped loving her—that's what his look said. But he had to clean this thing up first—had to make a man of himself again.

At the bottom of the letter he'd scribbled, "Tell her how it was—she mustn't blame herself. I don't blame her. We both made mistakes. . . . She found she couldn't go against her love—and I found—you know what I found—" Lee smiled wryly.

I know it by heart—"Tell her after I got her letter I came back to the outfit—I thought if I made this thing right then maybe—"

He didn't finish, boys. He knew he didn't have a Chinaman's chance.

I wrote the girl a letter—it wasn't returned; but I never got an answer.



Bill Adams

ONE THING AT A TIME

OILSKINS hung on the bulkhead, with sea boots beside them. In a locker were tin plates, tin forks and tin spoons. Full of 'baccy smoke the forecastle was.

Broad John Aird rose of a sudden, his hair nigh touching the beams overhead, so tall he was.

"One thing at a time," said he. "What good's talking of women? What good'll they do ye here?"

"What good'll they do ye anywhere?" asked Connor.

"Aye! Answer that, will ye?" growled old Shaw.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed young Ross. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ye're a fool, Ross," growled old Shaw.

"T'would be so with you, were you not so old and crabby," said Ross.

"No one answers my question," said Connor. "A place for everything, and everything in its place."

"There's room for a girl any place," said Ross.

Aird hunted in his pocket, and fetched out a picture.

"You'll be lucky do you see your woman again in a year, Aird," said Connor.

They turned into their bunks. Last, young Ross blew out the lamp.

"It's cold in my bunk," said Ross, pulling blankets to his chin.

"If it's cold ye are with your young blood, what d'ye suppose it is with me?" asked old Shaw.

"No girl could ever warm your blood," laughed Ross.

The forecastle door was opened. The mate looked in, striking a match and holding it high.

"Are you all here?" he asked.

"All here, sir. But no girl, worse luck," said young Ross.

The match went out. The mate said:

"Tumble out lively when the tug-boat comes to take us to sea."

IN THE cabin the skipper bent over a girl who lay in her bunk. Her face was pale. Too thin she was, yet she was pretty despite it. Great gray eyes. Soft brown hair. Oval face. A slip of a girl, with the prettiest mouth and chin that ever you saw.

"You'll be all right soon," said the skipper. "A whiff of sea air's all you've been needing."

"I don't want to be a nuisance, father," said the girl.

"I'm captain here. If you're no nuisance to me, you're no nuisance to any one. That's that," said the skipper.

'TWAS mid-forenoon of the next day. The brig was running down a sunny sea, white caps breaking from horizon to horizon, here and there a tumbled cloud drifting across the pale sky. Watching young Ross at work, the mate stood by the fore rigging. A little way up the rigging, Connor was tucking a splice.

"Send two men aft here, Mister Mate!" called the skipper.

The skipper led Connor and young Ross down the companion-way to the cabin, where, on a canvas cot, lay the girl.

"Carry that cot out to the deck and up to the poop, to the lee of the chart house," he ordered.

The skipper preceded them up the ladder to the poop, Connor at the head, Ross at the foot of the cot. The girl looked at Ross.

"I don't want to be a nuisance," she said. He made a gesture, as though to say: "I could carry you with one hand."

"It must be wonderful to be a sailor," said the girl, looking at Ross's strong shoulders. He made no answer, by voice or eye. At the head of the ladder, the skipper was looking down at them.

Old Shaw, at the wheel, looked up from his compass.

"So there's a woman aboard? Heaven help us then," he muttered.

"Keep your eyes on your compass, Shaw!" called the mate.

"There it starts. Trouble already," muttered Shaw to himself.

Connor and Ross set the cot down in the lee of the chart house, where no wind could reach it. Connor hurried off without looking at the girl. Ross touched his cap to her and followed.

"I feel better already, father," said the girl.

"The sea's the great healer. You'll be well in no time," said the skipper.

"She don't look like much," said Connor, starting into the rigging again.

"It'd make no difference to you what she looked like," said Ross.

"Of course not. She's the skipper's daughter," said Connor.

"I was not meaning that," laughed Ross.

"Quit talking! Get on with your work!" called the mate.

"There it is again. Trouble already," muttered old Shaw.

By and by the bell struck. Four bells. Ross went to take the wheel.

"When I'm better, may I learn to steer, father?" asked the girl.

"We'll see," answered the skipper, and went below.

The girl watched young Ross, now heaving the wheel up, now putting it down, making scarce an effort it seemed to her. When the brig lifted her bows, dipping her stern deep to the hollows, she could see the wake, a long swirling pathway trailing far astern. She drew long breaths, filling her bosom with the sea's pure wine.

IT was noon. The sailors sat at dinner.

"I wish I was skipper, so I could have me wimmen with me. What does she look like?" said Aird.

"I could lift her with one hand," said Connor. "What good's talking of it?"

"I seen Ross looking at her. He touched his cap to her," said Aird.

"You're fools. There'll be trouble in this ship," growled old Shaw.

Presently, relieved at the wheel by Shaw, Ross entered. "Not so bad, eh? She says she's sorry," he said, grinning down at Connor and Aird.

"Sorry for what?" asked Connor.

"Sorry there's but one decent-looking lad in the ship," laughed Ross.

DAYS were gone by. Her canvas lightly filled by an easy trade wind, the brig sailed blue waters. At the wheel stood the girl, Aird at her side to teach her to steer.

"How long have you been at sea?" asked the girl.

"'Tis not well to talk at the wheel, miss. Your eyes on the compass, please," said Aird.

"A sailor thinks of nothing but the ship, it seems," laughed the girl.

"You'll be making me trouble if you let her get off her course," said Aird. "Your eyes on the compass, please."

"She's on her course. Why should I not speak then?" asked the girl.

"One thing at a time. 'Tis a rule of the seas," said Aird.

"Rules, rules, rules," said the girl.

"Need for rules if one's to get anywhere," said Aird.

The skipper looked from the chart room.

"You're there to attend to what you're doing, not to talk," he called to Aird.

"There. You've made me trouble, miss," said Aird.

"You, Shaw, go take Aird's place. Keep your mouth shut," ordered the mate.

"What's the matter with Aird that he's so solemn, Mister Shaw?" asked the girl.

"There's been women in his life," said old Shaw.

The girl laughed and, to make the ship fall off her course, put the wheel up, a twinkle in her eyes. Instantly Shaw's hand was on the wheel.

"You remind me of Moses," said the girl.

"Never heard of him, miss," said old Shaw.

"He was a law-giver," said the girl.

"Then he never had no truck with women, miss," said old Shaw.

"Take your hand from the wheel, please. I'm steering, not you," said the girl.

Shaw kept his hand on the wheel. She tried to push it away. It stayed.

The mate said:

"Ross, go take Shaw's place. He's doing all the steering. Use your head."

"Hold her to her course, if you can. I doubt it," said Ross when Shaw was gone.

The girl kept her eyes on the compass. The brig sailed true. The wind freshened and shifted, coming from another quarter. The mate called the men to trim the sails. With the new wind, the brig steered harder.

"I'm getting tired," said the girl.

"You wanted to steer, didn't you? Go ahead and steer," smiled Ross.

The girl stared hard at Ross, her cheeks flushed, her eyes angry.

"You're a brute," she said.

"Sure, of course I'm a brute," said young Ross.

The skipper appeared.

"Why didn't you call me? Can't you see she's tired?" he asked Ross.

"I was obeying orders, sir," said Ross.

"Take the wheel and steer," ordered the skipper.

"No, father. I want to steer," said the girl.

"Obey orders," said the skipper, and led her away.

He re-entered the chart house. Seated on the skylight, she watched Ross steer. The wind came harder. He hove the wheel up and down easily.

"What brutes they all are. All they can think of is the ship," thought the girl. "One thing at a time. Always one thing at a time," she murmured.

DAYS were gone by. A misty drizzle hid the sea. A fresh wind was blowing. In oilskin jacket and trousers, the girl stood on the poop beside the skipper. Presently she started down to the deck, where the men were hauling on a rope. The skipper called her back.

"One thing at a time. You've not learned to steer yet," he said.

"I'm sick of your old rules, father," said the girl, and went down to join the sailors, despite him.

"She'll be running the ship yet. See if she don't," growled old Shaw to Aird beside him.

"See here, miss," said young Ross, and showed her how to pull on a rope.

"Watch out there!" called the mate.

The men braced themselves, ready for the big sea that was rolling toward the railing. Just as it came roaring aboard, young Ross put an arm around the girl, his other hand fast to a stanchion. While Shaw and Aird were swept from their feet, he held her safe. When the water was gone, she laughed up to him.

"Thank you," she said.

It was late evening, dark and drizzly, without stars. The men were sitting in their forecastle when the girl entered. To old Shaw she said, as she sat down. "Take off my sea boots, please. They got full of water as I came forward. My feet are cold."

"Easy now, Shaw," said Aird. "A girl's foot ain't like a man's."

"You do it. You knows about women," said old Shaw. Aird drew her sea boots off. She drew off her stockings.

"Please rub my feet. They're cold," said the girl.

Aird shook his head.

"My hands is rough. They'd rub you to blisters," he said.

The bell struck. From the bows came the voice of young Ross, keeping lookout.

"All's well, sir."

"I'll go and ask Mister Ross to do it," laughed the girl, and ran barefoot up to the forecastle head.

"Now there'll be trouble," said old Shaw.

"I can't rub your feet. No one's allowed to talk to the lookout man," said young Ross.

"I didn't ask you to talk. Just rub my feet, please," said the girl.

"I'm keeping lookout. One thing at a time," said Ross.

"Rules, rules, rules. You're just a brute," said the girl.

"Sure, I'm a brute," said young Ross.

The mate looked into the forecastle and asked:

"Where's the skipper's daughter?"

"On the lookout wi' Ross, sir," said Aird.

"You, Ross! Where's that girl?" asked the mate, stepping to the forecastle head.

"Here I am, rubbing my feet," said the girl from the gloom.

"Your father told me to give you a spanking if I found you forward," said the mate.

"I'd like to see you do it," said the girl.

"Aird!" called the mate, and when Aird came said: "You and me've got kids of our own, Aird. Lay her over the windlass."

"Aye, sir. They needs it once in a while," said Aird.

The girl wriggled free from Aird and ran down to the deck. From behind her she heard Ross's laughing voice say

to the mate, "You should have asked me to hold her, sir. I'd have held her all right."

"Brute," she exclaimed.

"Where've you been?" asked the skipper, when the girl came to the poop.

"Sailors are brutes," she replied. "They tried to spank me."

In the forecastle Aird and the mate stood laughing. Old Shaw said: "We'll have trouble yet. See if we don't."

DAYS were gone by. It was blowing a heavy gale, the brig laboring in great sea, with sprays flying over her in clouds. At the wheel was Shaw. Now and again, despite him, she fell off into the sea, rolling horribly, her hull straining, her masts straining, her rigging jerking to her wild motion. The skipper entered the chart room. The mate followed, shutting the door behind him.

"She'll be all right—if the cargo doesn't shift," said the skipper.

"That's what's worrying me, sir," said the mate.

The girl made her way along the poop to old Shaw.

"What's going to happen?" she shouted to him.

"Here's wot comes of having a woman aboard," replied old Shaw.

A ray of light broke through the dark, scurrying clouds, and at that moment the skipper and mate came back to the poop deck.

"Good! The worst's over," shouted the skipper.

The brig lifted her bows high, high, and higher, her stern dipping so deep to a sea hollow that water came swirling 'round old Shaw's knees. "Steady! Steady her now, Shaw!" shouted the skipper.

Old Shaw hove with all his weight on the wheel spokes. The mate sprang to help him. Despite their efforts, the brig yawed, and took a roll so terrific that it seemed she must turn turtle. Aird, Connor and young Ross ran from the forecastle. And at that instant the wind fell suddenly. A ray of light broke from the clouds again.

While Shaw and the mate hove the wheel down, the brig came slowly up to the sea, but, instead of rolling to windward, remained lying far over.

Skipper and mate looked at each other. No need for words. That cargo had shifted.

"Get the boat into the water. She may go down at any minute," ordered the skipper.

"Get into the boat," the skipper ordered the girl. To Ross he said: "Go with her. Keep the boat astern. We'll try to trim cargo and save the ship. If she sinks while we're below decks, cut the painter so the boat drifts free." He added, "Pick us up if you can. If not—" and he nodded toward the girl as though to say, "Take care of her as best you can."

Leaning on the long steering oar, young Ross kept the boat astern of the brig, her bows facing the sea.

"See if there's food and water aboard," he called to the girl. She opened the locker.

"There's a little box of biscuit and a small keg of water," she called back.

A torrent of rain beat down. A squall whined over the sea. The brig was almost invisible in the driving rain and spray. Presently the rain changed to a dense mist. The brig was lost to view.

The boat jerked at her painter, so that her bows were almost drawn under the sea. Ross tossed his knife to the girl.

"Be ready to cut the painter when I shout," he called to her. Knife in hand, she knelt in the bow.

"Cut!" shouted Ross, presently.

From the invisible brig the skipper shouted: "Where are you, Ross?" The wind drowned his voice.

"What's going to happen to us?" called the girl.

"One thing at a time. Don't lose your head," he replied.

"Father's drowned," she said, and sat down and began to cry.

"I'm sorry," said Ross, and sat down beside her, taking her hand in his. "Keep your heart up. Maybe they're all right," he said.

She rested her head on his strong shoulder.

Hours passed. Ross fetched biscuit and water for the girl.

"What about you?" she asked.

"Go on and eat. I'll eat when I'm hungry," he replied.

She ate and drank.

"How long will our food last?" she asked.

"A long time. Till a ship picks us up," he answered.

Dusk fell. He laid her in the boat's bottom and drew a sail over her.

"Go to sleep. I'll keep watch," he said.

"You must eat," said the girl.

"Don't worry about me. A sailor can always take care of himself," he said.

Morning came. Ross handed her food and water.

"I ate while you slept," he told her, answering her question with a lie. At noon he gave her food and water again.

"Twice a day's enough for me. I'll eat this evening," he told her.

"I beg your pardon. You're not a brute," she said. He answered, smiling, "You don't know me yet."

"Keep watch while I snooze a while," he said, and slept till evening.

When he wakened, she was dozing. He woke her and passed her food and water.

"I ate while you slept," he lied, and pointed to a few crumbs he had purposely dropped into the boat's bottom.

Two days dragged by, with heavy fog all the time. Always Ross pretended to have eaten while she had been asleep. Of water he took just enough to moisten his lips.

The third day broke clear, with a hot sun. Using the sail, he rigged an awning for her. He looked 'round the sea, seeking the brig. The sea was empty. She began to cry:

"Never give up hope," he said. She said: "You're very brave." Not daring to speak much, lest she note the hoarseness of his parched and tortured throat, he shrugged his shoulders.

Day came again. The biscuit was gone, the keg all but empty. Hour on hour dragged by, the sun blazing, the little sail affording shelter enough for the girl only. Ross drenched her clothes and his own, that they might thereby soak in a little moisture. That night the girl finished the last of the water, Ross holding the keg to her lips, lest a drop be wasted, and smiling into her frightened eyes.

"We're going to die," she whispered.

"One thing at a time. We're not dead yet," he whispered back, making the words audible only with bitter effort.

All that night he held her in his arms, her head on his breast. All night she dozed and wakened, dozed and wakened again, while, in agony of thirst, he gazed into the starlit emptiness.

Morning came. A light wind ruffled the sea. Ross soaked their clothing. Then, holding her tight, he looked 'round the sea again, everything a dim blur before his anguished eyes. She dozed away. His head nodded. With his chin upon her soft head, he also dozed away.

Wakened by loud voices, they looked up—at the skipper and mate, at Aird and Connor, staring down at them from the brig's rail. Old Shaw lowered the Jacob's ladder that they might climb aboard.

Ross rose on unsteady feet and lifted the girl.

"You first," he whispered.

The girl looked into the eyes of young Ross. He tried to smile.

"One thing at a time, dearest," she said, and pressed her lips to his.

COWARDS ARE BRAVEST

By Perry Adams

WE SAT, the Wise Man of Peshawar and I, on a terrace so high above the street that sounds of late evening traffic scarcely reached us; what little we heard, drifted up like echoes of pigmies at play in another world. Depthless blue black, star dusted as a woman's gown with sequins, the heavens seemed to reach down to swing us out into space.

Through the massive uprights of a stone parapet, only the lower end of Manhattan was visible, now gleaming dully like the tip of a dusty boot. A confusion of tiny lights, some moving, marked the rivers and the harbor with its islands; beyond, coldly white and indistinct, other lights twinkled on more distant shores.

For a long time we hadn't spoken. I was full of the strangeness of having the Wise Man here beside me, so far from accustomed haunts, on the lip of this penthouse. With no conscious effort of will I could see him elsewhere, in a thousand postures, a lean, sandy-haired, hawklike figure, about him the indefinable air of authority which is the heritage of his sort of Englishman.

And suddenly the dry, good, dusty air of Northwest India was in my nostrils, and the fantastic sights and sounds of a fantastic land were all about me. Something gripped at my throat; I was filled with a huge nostalgia. The grand days, the lusty days, the days of high adventure, were spread behind us, one by one, the pattern worked out complete, irrevocable. The moving finger had written, ceased.

Peer where I might through the tracery of those unforgetable years, there came the Wise Man—in khaki, mostly, but, too, in mess kit, in mufti, in a dinner coat, in tails—sagacious, efficient, inscrutable. Long before my coming

they had given him that title—the Wise Man. You see, he was so much more than a colonel of Sikhs! In a world where men counted great knowledge of the Pathan and his ways as commonplace, the Wise Man was the authority of authorities.

He knew the tribal interzone—that barren, mountainous strip between India and Afghanistan—as you and I know our faces in a mirror. He understood the manners and customs of the strange people there as few white men have ever understood them. Alone, on countless occasions he had risked his life, with only his wits for shield, to garner some vital bit of otherwise unobtainable information for the Raj. In those cheerless hills, over many a camp-fire, I knew they must still talk of him. But there they called him *Shaitan*—the devil—for he had always been one too many for them.

They set traps; many a hook was baited, many an ambush laid. Through all he moved serene, perhaps the merest suggestion of a twinkle in his hard, understanding, gray-blue eyes.

A *pucka* sahib. A link of finest steel with the frontier of yesterday—a frontier that knew not the great ships with wings that drop eggs of death, nor tanks, nor armored cars, nor wireless. Oh yes, a survival of a romantic age, I admit—of a period gone forever—when by superiority alone, a small group of benevolent despots held Hindustan in the hollow of their hands.

Well I saw the transition from old to new; and I cannot count the gain. No matter.

So I had the Wise Man in New York with me for a long visit; he had landed yesterday. He had left London, it seemed, worried about some securities of his—British Consols—and today I had sent him to a cavern called Wall Street, where they practise rites stranger than in any cult of the East.

"How did you get on with my brokers?" I asked.

He reached to the small table between us, poured some Scotch into his glass and swizzled soda into the warm amber. "They did me proud; reassured me no end. I feel carefree as a child. With all that terrific efficiency at my beck, how could it be otherwise?"

"Perhaps, these days, they don't feel so efficient as they look."

He nodded. "One of the junior partners said as much. He and I stood, staring out of a window. Opposite us they were putting up a building; the steel workers had reached our level, thirty stories up. Fascinating. Made me dizzy to watch 'em."

"They have nerve, those boys who work in high places."

He sipped his drink. "Nerve. Of a kind, yes. But I wonder. I asked the broker chap what happened if one of them fell—if the rest merely went on working. He said they didn't; that they knocked off for the balance of the day."

He stared at his glass, idly clinking the ice in it.

"Why do they knock off?" he resumed. "Is it solely out of respect for a fallen comrade? I sensed there might be more to it than that. I got the picture of a group of unimaginative men, trained by degrees to work at great heights—those men suddenly made craven by a vivid appeal to their sluggish imaginations: a slip, a scream, perhaps—a body hurtling downward. So they quit. Brave?

"I don't know. Perhaps I'm unfair. And it really doesn't matter. But it started a train of thought that reaches far into the past. And all, mind you, wrapped about that perpetual, perhaps unsolvable riddle: What is a brave man?

"The trouble is, we perceive only the outward signs. Some dull-witted swashbuckler, who never in his life had an abstract thought, goes out and performs a perfectly incredible feat. A nation honors him; on his chest we pin a bronze cross, labeled 'For Valour'. He is, we say, a hero. Is he?

"Look here. Remember that electrified wire that stretched across the bit of frontier between Michni and Abazai—controlled from Peshawar? When the Afridis took a fancy to raid the blockhouses inside it, they'd drive bullocks against the wire, causing a short circuit. The unfortunate bullocks, of course, were electrocuted. Yet how many, do you suppose, could have been forced near that wire, had they been able to reason that death awaited them? Had they been gifted with the ability to think abstractly? A bad analogy, perhaps, but it will serve.

"I tell you, the truly brave of this world are the folk of imagination, of fine perception, who never can approach danger without funking it; who carry on, the task before them a crawling horror, their very souls shrinking in terror—dying a thousand deaths before doing their stint—yet who go on to triumph because in them is that God-given spark we call will-power!"

"Thanks," I said with disrespectful levity. "After all these years, a hero discovers himself. I never went under fire—not once—without practically having a hemorrhage. And as for going in with the steel—"

"Shut up," he growled. "You weren't so bad. Or if you were, you managed to fool us. Exactly my point. But I wasn't thinking of you. I was—did I ever tell you the story of Valpy?"

The name didn't mean a thing to me. I said so.

"No," he mused, "it wouldn't. He was before your time. Well, Valpy was C. O. of the regiment when I was second in command—the Honorable Basil d'Agincourt Fitzhugh Valpy—a great swell and a grand feller."

"Wise Man," I murmured, pushing the decanter toward him, "I think you must have made that name up as you went along. It stuns me."

He leaned forward and fixed me with a stern eye. "And how would you like to go to hell?"

Just then I didn't feel I'd care for the journey in the least; so without replying, I relaxed into my long, comfortable chair and half closed my eyes.

THE narrative covers a period of less than twenty-four hours (the Wise Man said), and like life itself, begins in the dark.

I can feel the night, sticky-hot, moist, oppressive—the tail of the monsoon lashing about somewhere near, with welcome rain that so often misses the frontier completely. There was no moon, the stars were dimmed by haze, and inside Fort Number Three it was as black as your hat. For in that farthest outpost beyond Thal there were adequate reasons, just then, why a display of lights would not have been healthy. Also, there probably wasn't a full pint of oil throughout the garrison.

The livestock inside the fort compound had long since been eaten; we were subsisting on flesh of a kind not deemed pleasant fare by epicures. Rats—and worse. All supplies were low or out entirely: for the men, such necessities as *dal, atta* and *ghee* had ceased to exist. It's the devil when you deprive Sikhs of their proper rations—they'd turned sullen and murmurous. Scurvy had raised its ugly head; worse, that day the M. O. had reported four cases of dysentery.

There remained about forty rounds of ammunition per man, and some fifty shells to serve our pair of little mountain battery guns. So, added to the fact that we were starving, we were ill equipped for the work in hand. Just what turn that "work" might take, at present no one knew. And therein lay the entire difficulty.

For weeks a certain gentleman had been knocking at our door—Shaikh Salim, turbulent chief of the Jowakis. Of

all the Adam Khel Afridis, this fellow was the most bigoted, bloodthirsty and troublesome. Thief by force of circumstance, murderer by choice, even among the neighboring clans he was without honor; if he possessed any single virtue, he had kept it well concealed. Just then he was at the height of his power, with ten thousand fiends driven *ghazi* by the *mullahs*, to work his sweet will. Sweet—hah! Salim and his horde were still outside the fort, to be sure, but there was some one inside he wanted—wanted more than anything on earth—Valpy.

And the whole frontier knew why. There had been another day, another field, when Salim and Valpy were younger. Valpy, a company commander at the time, had managed to maneuver Salim into a *cul-de-sac* in the hills. Salim, you see, was fighting over terrain then strange to him—Khyber country up near Ali Musjid—else neither Valpy nor the devil himself could ever have tricked one so wily into such a position.

As it was, the affair was simplicity itself. Valpy and his men took cover in the valley beneath the trapped Salim, while a battery of field artillery began slowly but surely plastering the Shaikh's followers against the unscalable face of rock behind them.

Presently, through his glasses, Valpy saw a man, with something that passed for a white flag, making his way down the valley. The guns ceased firing. Instead of coming with the expected plea for mercy, Salim's emissary bore a message laughable in its arrogant naïveté—a message since become famous.

"Send your artillery home," Salim said in effect, "then come out and meet us man to man. If you will do this, you may have choice of position and any further advantage you may name."

"Go back to your master," Valpy told the messenger, "and inform him that Allah is always on the side of the artillery. This is war."

The Jowaki departed; and in due course, the cannonading was resumed. That night, Salim and his remaining handful crept down the valley and escaped through the very position occupied by the British, pausing just long enough to cut the throats of a few outlying pickets.

This was mere routine. You may be sure that the Shaikh had never forgotten Valpy—nor forgiven him. He swore by the Nine Imams, by the Beard of the Prophet and by every oath sacred to a devout Mohammedan, that some day he would cut the heart from that filthy eater of swine's flesh who had taken the name of Allah in vain—that unspeakable dog, the white Unbeliever who, hiding behind his guns, had refused to come out and fight as true men had fought since time immemorial.

He had waited a long time for revenge, had Salim, for since the disastrous meeting in his youth, he and his people had never again faced the regiment. That he knew almost instantly when the unit was temporarily transferred from the First Peshawar Division to the Independent Brigade at Kohat, I haven't the slightest doubt. On the frontier, news of that sort travels with the speed of light. Yet even Salim himself could hardly have foreseen the curious twist of fate which decreed that our lot should take over from a Gurkha regiment garrisoned in Fort Three—in the very heart of Salim's country!

Until our arrival Salim had been quiet enough; with the other chiefs of the Adam Khel he had, more or less, been living up to a treaty recently made with the Raj, whereby for a small annual subsidy all clans of the tribe agreed to keep hands off British property.

But with Valpy's arrival, the situation changed instantly. The Shaikh served notice of his intentions by capturing a foraging party from the fort—a *naik* and six men. Sparing the naik, he tortured and finally killed the unhappy sepoys

with characteristic brutality. To the naik he said:

"Tell your colonel that Shaikh Salim never forgets an indignity to the True Faith, nor to his people. Allah, the All-Merciful, has seen fit to deliver the commander of Sikhs and his regiment into our hands. To every man within the fort we promise the fate of your six sepoys; but the colonel himself shall taste more refined, more splendid tortures: tongueless, legless, armless, without eyes or ears, writhing on his white belly like a bleeding snake, he shall know our contempt to the full; and after long agony, die."

The naik delivered the message. The siege began.

WITH Fort Number Two only thirty miles east, I know you have begun to wonder how it was that we hadn't long since been relieved. Minute by minute we'd wondered, ourselves. Wondered—and prayed. We reasoned that our long silence—the permanent telephone line had been cut—must bring the Brigade packing. Nothing happened; so far as the outside world was concerned, we might as well have been marooned on an uncharted island in the middle of the Pacific.

There was a near-by hill from which, normally, we could reach Fort Two by heliograph. But it was now utterly impossible to maintain a party on top of it long enough to open communication; trying it, we'd had twenty killed and twice as many wounded. By night, too, men had attempted to get up there to use the old flap-flap signaling lamps—remember them?—but the watchful Jowakis nullified every attempt.

Runners, you say—of course! We'd been sending them out under cover of darkness—thirty-eight of 'em—always to find bits of them thrown over our walls the next morning. What had happened to supply carts coming to us from Thal we could only guess. Salim had us trapped completely.

Things had reached a pass where we might hold out for three more days. And so, besides the oppressiveness of the night, realization of impending disaster lay heavily upon us all. Deep in the bowels of the fort was a small, square, windowless room—one of several such used as storehouses, when there was anything to store. It was here that Valpy had called a council of war.

The picture is photographed on my mind like something one remembers in a wax works—a group immobile, tense—Valpy seated on a camp stool before a rough native table, where fitfully sputtered a bit of dirty candle resurrected from somebody's haversack; and the officers of the regiment—the British officers, I mean—ranged about the whitewashed walls, staring at him. In that close, vaultlike atmosphere was a smell of dust and decay; a smell suggestive of death itself. Wavering shadows danced eerily on sunken, emaciated faces, highlighting them into odd planes, until one thought inevitably of so many upright cadavers, and wondered why they did not all collapse. Several were not far from it.

Valpy was fiddling aimlessly with a briar pipe, innocent of tobacco. None of us had had the luxury of a smoke for a long time. Using the stem like a pencil, he began tracing thoughtful patterns on the table. The faint rasp of amber on wood mingled with the restrained breathing of those desperate men.

At last Valpy looked up, brilliant black eyes sweeping around in an arc that included every one. Thick black hair, which he wore brushed straight back from a high, generous forehead, was shot with gray that hadn't been there a few weeks before. His scholarly, rather pointed face was deeply lined. He was suffering intensely, for the regiment had been his life; and he had seen it fading

away before his eyes, with worse portended.

Yet, studying him, I was all too well aware that behind his terrific anxiety for his command, another, and an even more personal matter, filled his every waking moment—his dreams, too.

For I shared a secret with him that no one else had ever suspected. Ever since his early days on the frontier, when he had seen the horrors wrought by tribal knives upon captives, Valpy had lived in dread of bodily mutilation. Death itself—a soldier's death—he feared not at all. But torture—some queer twist in his brain prevented his considering that sort of end—a possibility for all of us who soldiered on the frontier—with normal detachment. As time had gone on, I think the fear of showing fear, should the critical moment arrive, had become greater than the complex itself.

Well, despite his fine—his even brilliant—campaign record, never before had he been faced with the imminent probability of having to meet the one experience in life which he did not feel competent to endure with traditional stoicism.

Mentally sick? Not at all. He was a man among men, I tell you! For more than fifteen years I'd been with him almost constantly—don't you suppose I knew the stuff he was made of? Had I not been so completely in his confidence, by no faintest outward sign could I have guessed now, that already in his mind's eye he was facing the horror of seeing his body sliced slowly to pieces.

When he spoke, his voice was low and clear.

"A little while ago, the subahdar major handed me our present parade state," he said. "It shows that we're reduced to four hundred and fifty-seven effectives—all ranks. What with the usual night sniping and spreading disease, by morning that will be, say, four hundred. Were these so-called effectives at present physically capable of sustained action in open country, and on top of that, of a thirty-mile march, I'd say a sortie would be the thing to try. But the condition of the regiment is only too well known to you. Such a step is out of the question."

Jack North, a company commander, spoke up:

"Better to take a shot at winning clear, sir, than to wait until we're so weak we can't even resist further attack."

Feet shuffled uneasily; there was a murmur of approval. If they had to die anyway, they wanted a final gesture of defiance, these young men.

Patiently, Valpy shook his head.

"I mustn't consider what we'd like to do—only what's wisest. There's still a chance that relief will come in time. That's the gamble we're going to make, gentlemen."

A heavy silence followed his words. I could feel it was on the tip of more than one tongue to cry out that if we hadn't been relieved up to now, we never would be. The sand in the glass was running low.

Jack North spoke again: "Has all thought of getting a runner through been abandoned, sir?"

Some one laughed mirthlessly.

"I've sent about forty men to their deaths that way," Valpy replied quietly. "Last night, as you know, Subahdar Rangit Singh was captured—audibly, almost under our walls. This morning, when the men saw those—parts of him thrown into the compound—Rangit, the most popular Indian officer—the effect on the rank and file was—profound. But assuming some one might have better luck than all those others—might get through this tight cordon about the fort—I doubt whether there's a single Indian officer, N. C. O. or man strong enough to make the journey to Fort Two."

I said: "All those poor devils of Sikhs have been too patently what they are. Once seen, even in the dark, the Jowakis can't possibly mistake them for one of

themselves. In the past, I've been rather lucky with disguise. I'd like to make myself up as a mullah and have a try. At once."

Valpy looked at me quickly. "No, no. As second in command, I need you here."

"But I—"

"No," he said with stiff finality. He pushed the cold pipe into his pocket with a sigh. "Yet I feel a British officer should make the attempt. I'd been coming to that. I want a volunteer."

Every one volunteered. Of course. Anything short of that would have been unthinkable.

Valpy looked them over, one by one, until his critical eye at last singled out his young brother, Ralph. Have I mentioned Ralph? He'd come out to us the year before, fresh from Sandhurst—was the baby of the regiment. Valpy was more like a father to him than a brother; there was a good twenty-five years between them. Valpy studied Ralph, and I saw the spark of decision in the older man's eyes.

"How do you feel, Ralph?" Valpy asked him.

"Fit," Ralph said stoutly.

He was just a kid. Immaturity, the freshness of youth still clung to him; darkly handsome, a sort of juvenile portrait of his brother, there was some gamin-like quality about him as he stood there in his dirty uniform, a broad streak of dust across one cheek. A cherub in khaki, if you like—and so very, very eager! Hardened old crocodile that I was, I felt a sudden lump in my throat.

"Well," Valpy was saying, "by the look of you, you're in far better shape than any of the others." His eyes left Ralph's face. Staring at the table he added gruffly: "You're elected, young feller."

Then Jack North, who was Ralph's company commander, did a thing I can never forget. He said:

"Ralph won't stand a Chinaman's chance going out as the others have. Salim's people will nail him before he's gone a hundred yards. Let me go first. And while they're busy snaffling me, Ralph can slip out and perhaps get through."

A chunky North Country man, with the look of a man of great honesty, if no particular imagination, North spoke as calmly as though he were making a routine report. Any fool could see that his magnificent offer, if accepted, would, truly, swing the odds slightly more in Ralph's favor.

Thinking out loud, Valpy said:

"If Ralph doesn't get through, no one will. Sporting of you, Jack."

That was all, but those few words, accepting the sacrifice, were like an accolade.

There was a pause—one of those awkward, uncomfortable moments that on the stage would be called "bad theater." Valpy stood up.

"That's all," he said. "Somebody find the subahdar major and send him here. You two—come back in ten minutes."

They filed out quietly, almost on tiptoe, leaving Valpy and myself alone in the room. He left his place behind the table and, with a rare gesture, put his hand on my shoulder. A mask had slipped from his face; his lips twitched, he looked at me with furtive eyes.

"Better men than their colonel," he said harshly. "That man North—good God—suppose I were in his boots? Do you think I could face what he'll face?"

"I know you could," I said evenly, "and I know you would."

He removed his hand from my shoulder—made a wide gesture of contempt. "Bah—you know nothing of the sort! Torture—slow, horrible torture—to walk deliberately into it—no, not that; it simply isn't in me. I'm a bloody coward."

"Until you prove that," I told him, "I'll never believe it."

"And my own brother—that child—

deliberately sending him out like a lamb to slaughter—"

"An inevitable choice. I wanted to go—we all did—but Ralph *is* in better condition than we. Clearly. Knowing that, what else could you do?"

"I could have gone myself!"

I grasped his elbows, shook him.

"Stop it," I cried. "You couldn't cover thirty miles at present—and you know it. Besides, your place is here with the regiment. Pull yourself together!"

He started to reply, but we heard footsteps outside. The subahdar major came in, his grizzled, fine old head held proudly on competent shoulders—every inch of him a Singh, a Lion of the Faith.

There were Indian clothes to be procured, Valpy explained, for the sahibs who were about to attempt the thing at which so many had failed.

That would be no difficult matter, the old fellow replied. There were several civilian, non-Sikh followers in the fort. With a little ingenuity, a few changes—but the stain for the sahibs' skins—what of that?

"There must be a little coffee left," I suggested. It would do.

We left Valpy—the subahdar major to see about clothes, I to order a pot of coffee boiled.

AFTER what seemed an endless delay I returned with the coffee and a little camel's hair brush which the *bowarchi* had managed to dig up in the kitchen.

Ralph, Jack North and the subahdar major had rejoined Valpy. Ralph was already dressed. Save for his skin, already he made a passable young Jowaki.

Jack North refused to put on the native clothes.

"Why increase my chance of getting through?" he argued. "My object is to get caught." His grim logic was sound. He remained in uniform.

I began applying the hot coffee to Ralph's face, hands and ankles; several coats were necessary before he acquired the desired shade. Under the flowing garments he wore his Sam Browne, to which were attached the few things he'd need for the journey, if he won clear.

While I worked over Ralph, the room slowly filled with officers—British and Indian. They had come to say good-by to Jack North and to wish Ralph luck.

The simple plan was discussed. When caught, Jack was to cry out, if possible; otherwise, Ralph was to slip out a few moments after Jack's departure.

I left them all in the little room. With heavy heart, I went down into the compound, where I ordered a detail of the guard to remove the huge beams which secured the stockade-type gate. Although it was now nearing midnight, news of the attempt had filtered through the regiment.

Weak and dispirited as most of the men were, they had turned out, filling the compound, when Jack North and Ralph appeared. That two of their sahibs were about to make a last desperate attempt to bring help appealed vastly to our Sikhs. Everywhere I heard whispers of "Shabash!" as the pair neared the gate.

The moment had arrived for Jack North to go. He had taken leave of the others inside. Casually, he shook hands with me and lastly, with Ralph. Not a word was spoken.

Just as the gate was about to be swung open, some near-by sniper let drive. His bullet ricocheted off the top of the wall and whined away into the darkness. There was no connection whatever between the random shot and what was taking place inside, but it was a vivid reminder of the watchful nearness of Salim's people. Valpy had been holding up his hand to signal the opening of the gate, and I saw an involuntary shudder pass through him. His cursed imagination was at work.

At last he gave the signal by dropping

his hand. Noiselessly, the great gate swung open to a narrow crack. Jack North gave his helmet a funny little jaunty tap, as a man sometimes will a bowler hat to set it at an angle—stepped forward—and vanished.

Almost before we could draw breath, he shouted. We heard a few significant thuds, the purposeful patter of bare feet on the baked, stony ground—silence.

Ralph drifted nearer the gate. Up came Valpy's arm again; and in that minute I knew he felt like an executioner of his own flesh and blood. He saw beyond his brother's quiet departure; already Ralph was writhing under tribal knives. What Valpy saw in imagination, stayed his hand. Like a sleepwalker he started toward Ralph, and like a sleepwalker he permitted his arm to fall indecisively—in his absorption forgetting, I think, that it was the signal to reopen the gate.

Ralph's back was to him. Every nerve taut, he was watching that widening aperture—and was through it, with never a backward glance, leaving Valpy standing a pace behind the spot where he had been.

The towering gate closed with ponderous finality. Men sprang to replace the great retaining beams. I turned from the gate, to behold a sea of misty, upturned faces, Sikh and Englishman alike spellbound by the infinite somberness of the moment. We waited in an appalling silence. We waited forever—and nothing—absolutely nothing—no slightest sound—came to us from beyond the walls.

At last I became aware that the havildar of the guard was quietly collecting those of his men who had withdrawn and replaced the beams. They disappeared in the direction of the guard *godown*, set in a corner of the compound.

Presently tramping feet and hushed commands, in English "Sentries—pass!" the clicking of heels as the new sentries moved in and the old out, served notice that the routine of our small world must continue. And do you know—there was something positively cheerful about those familiar sounds; they were real, tangible, understandable—a man could tie to them. The tension was broken; the crowd commenced to disperse.

Hope! You could sense the dawn of it. The sepoys spoke with new animation: the *chota* sahib must have succeeded! There had been no sound of capture; surely, surely, he was through?

Since the closing of the gate Valpy had not moved. Arms hanging, chin sunk on breast, unseeing he stared at his boots. In spirit he was out there in the night with Ralph, feeling his way, step by step, through that tightly meshed, deadly ring.

"Come away," I said, touching his arm.

Like a man in a daze, he suffered me to lead him inside. We went into the long, echoing room used as an officers' mess. I fumbled at a sideboard, found a bottle—probably our last—and glasses; poured out two stiff pegs. "Drink this," I said.

He took the glass from my hand, drained it.

"Now for a few hours' sleep," I went on, putting down my empty glass.

"Sleep!" He fairly spat the word at me.

"He's clean away by now. By dawn he should be a third of the way."

"If he got through—if."

"Of course he did! And if he keeps clear of the cart track—as he will—there's no reason why he shouldn't make Fort Two by late afternoon, or evening."

"If he got through," Valpy muttered repetitiously.

"Lie down anyway," I suggested. We went out to his sleeping quarters, where I left him. In my own cubicle I undressed, felt my way in under the mosquito net and stretched out gratefully on the camp cot. I fell asleep almost at once.

A HAND was shaking my shoulder. Valpy said, "Wake up." In the gray half light just before dawn he was a shadowy figure through the tight mesh of the net.

I pulled the net from under the mattress and swung my feet to the floor. "What's happened?" I asked, still stupid with sleep.

He looked down at me with a hopeless expression in his dark eyes. "They got Ralph," he said dully.

I was on my feet in a flash. *How could he know?* How, save in one way! I remembered the remains of Rangit Singh—of all those others—thrown mockingly over the walls.

Valpy read my thoughts instantly. He always did. "Not what you're thinking, thank God. Jack North is back."

"Back? How—"

"Salim is holding Ralph. North was used as messenger."

"Holding him," I murmured uncomprehendingly. "What message did Salim send?"

"He knows Ralph is my brother," Valpy said shortly.

Still I didn't get it. "But what was the message?"

Valpy regarded me with a sort of frozen patience. "Ralph will be returned, unharmed, if I deliver myself up to Salim. I must leave the fort within an hour of sunrise and walk straight up the valley. Otherwise, they'll start doing to Ralph—what Salim has so long wanted to do to me."

He was gray under his tan, and some small part of the horror which filled him communicated itself to me.

"It's nothing but a trick," I blustered. "If you go, he'll have you both. What's Salim's word worth? What makes you believe he'll play square?"

"I've *got* to believe," he whispered. Suddenly he sat down, buried his face in his hands.

And then it came to me that had he said anything else, the enormous respect I had for him would have changed to contempt. Yes, slim though the chance was that Salim would live up to his bargain, Valpy must give Ralph this possible opportunity to return to the fort, where at the last moment he might be relieved with the rest of us. It was an obligation which transcended even Valpy's duty to the regiment as its commander. . . . He had to believe, to act accordingly. No man could do otherwise.

But my heart bled for him. I knew that no matter how unspeakable the tortures Salim had in store, they could be no worse than the agony Valpy already suffered.

We sat there in stark silence. What could I—could any one—say to help him in such a moment? No word—no outward force on earth could reach, could pluck out that ghastly complex of his, buried irrevocably in the unfathomable depths of his soul. If he were to find strength to sustain him, it must come from within.

An inarticulate lot, we English. I could not help him, but I wanted to cry out that his friendship had been the finest thing I'd known in the service. And he—when he raised his haggard face and looked at me with anguished, bloodshot eyes—I knew some similar phrase must be trembling on his lips. But how do you suppose we terminated what seemed destined to be our last private meeting in this life?

Valpy rose wearily to his feet and said:

"I'm going back to my room for a few minutes before I leave. I want to be alone."

And I said:

"Of course."

As he walked heavily away, my eyes followed him; and for the first time I observed an incredible thing which in my absorption had somehow previously escaped me. Valpy's graying hair had turned snow white. There was no doubt

of it: the light was growing stronger every instant, and a second quick glance, just as he disappeared, assured me that I was not mistaken. . . .

Of the next few minutes I retain no very clear impression. Vaguely, I remember my bearer bringing *chota hazri* —or what passed for it now—a cup of weak tea, perhaps—but I have no memory of pausing to drink it as I hurried into uniform. Then I was down in the compound, where the remains of the regiment had just been dismissed from the usual dawn "stand to". The men, sensing something unusual, loitered about curiously. Near the gate a group of officers surrounded Valpy.

The night's hint of rain had disappeared. It was cool and clear. Before I quite joined the group, Valpy stepped clear of it. And if his tunic was black with sweat—the sweat of paralyzing fear—his chin was up, his eyes steady.

The gate was opening.

In a voice hoarse with emotion I cried: "Parade—'shun!"

For a second he faced us—took my salute. Then he stepped close to me, grasped my hand. Almost gayly he said:

"So long—you dear old stickler for discipline."

And then he was away, marching out through the gate, shoulders back, head erect, as if he were leading the regiment on a route march.

We stood transfixed, the open gate forgotten. On he went, past the countless boulders which sheltered silent tribesmen, past all the *nullahs* and folds in the ground within which lurked still others, until presently he was clear of the shadow of the fort, out in the long rays of the early morning sun. Marching, marching—on his way to Calvary.

The well beloved figure dwindled—dwindled, until all I could see was the flash of his light Bedford cord breeches as his legs moved on and on. On and on.

And finally he rounded a rocky spur that jutted into the valley bed, and so I lost him.

THE Wise Man of Peshawar ceased speaking. It was only after a silence lasting several minutes that I realized he had thus abruptly ended his narrative.

"But you can't leave things like that!" I protested.

"Why not?" he growled. "This is Valpy's story. Isn't his victory complete—clear? What more need I say?"

"But—"

"Oh, relief came—dramatically enough—just as Salim advanced for what must surely have been the decisive attack. That was late the same afternoon."

"Yes, but—"

"Well—I owe you the rest, I suppose. Salim knew exactly how near the end of our rope we were in the fort. But the rapidity with which the relieving cavalry was advancing left his scouts no time to report their approach. Salim reasoned he had time enough for the final onslaught.

"I think he had feared from the beginning that Valpy might be killed outright when the fort was taken—and obviously, that didn't suit his book at all. So he delayed—as you've seen—until Valpy walked into his camp.

"Then, in order to wring the last ounce of ghoulish pleasure out of the situation, Salim took the time to send young Ralph back, so that we might know at first hand the kind of death which awaited any who survived the attack."

"You mean, Ralph was forced to witness—"

Slowly the Wise Man nodded, in his face a grief which the years could not soften. "I mean," he said, "just that."

THE CAMP-FIRE

CHARIOT racing, the dangerous and glittering sport of the earlier kings—Talbot Mundy gives us some interesting facts. The horses dreaded the skidding turns, the Alexandrines liked the races as races and often had "gentlemen drivers," but the Romans wanted smash-ups and deaths, and so they gave the reins to slaves.

Roman charioteers were almost without exception slaves. In Alexandria the charioteer very often was the equivalent of the "gentleman rider" of modern England. The chariot was essentially an Egyptian war-machine; but chariot racing was developed by the Greeks as a manly sport two or three centuries before the Romans began to take it seriously as a spectacle. Caeser, who invented the bull fight and a number of other spectacles, undoubtedly improved chariot racing in Rome after his return from Alexandria, where he had seen it at its best. The charioteer was even more important than the modern jockey, because of the terrific difficulty of the turns, which had to be taken at high speed, if only to avoid the foul driving of the other contestants, who would wreck a rival's chariot if they possibly could. The great difficulty was to prevent one's team from shying wide of the turning post; the horses dreaded the turns.

The length of a race, seven times around the course, was nearly five miles—a grueling race, which called for extreme skill in breeding, selecting and training horses. The most popular breeds of horses were Spanish and Cappadocian; but in Alexandria, in the time of Cleopatra, these strains were already being cross-bred to the Arab horse, which is the ancestor of the English thoroughbred. The political importance of chariot racing was due to the enormous expense involved. There was nothing more costly, nothing more popular, than to own a good stable and win races, so that to be a winning owner was the obvious goal of every parvenu politician.

The magnificent Street of Canopus, in Alexandria, on fine days used to be almost a stream of splendidly decorated racing chariots—a sort of Rotten Row, only that the chariots were driven at reckless speed. The Alexandrine crowd used to turn out in thousands to cheer its favorites, whom the women would pelt with flowers from the roofs of the colonades on both sides of the street. The Alexandrines never cared for gladiatorial exhibitions. Caesar, and some of the later emperors tried to popularize them, but they had to be held outside the city and only the rabble attended.

The Alexandrine upper classes were Greek, possessed by a thoroughly Greek delight in beauty, art and motion. They despised the Roman sadistic craving to witness cruelty. They did an enormous business in shipping wild animals to Rome for the spectacles in the arena, but for themselves they had a zoological garden, where the animals received expert care. The Greek, as compared to the Roman view of sportsmanship, is well suggested by, for instance, the boxing contests. True, the Greeks used the caestus (cestus), which was a glove made of leather thongs loaded with lead, bronze or iron disks, but to kill an opponent with it not only disqualified the winner but made him liable to heavy punishment.

The Romans wanted to see a man killed, the Greeks didn't. It was the same with chariot racing; nothing better pleased the Roman spectators than to see men and horses killed in a top-speed crash at the turn; that is why the charioteers were almost exclusively slaves. What the Greeks, and notably the Alexandrines craved, was to witness, and to take part in if they might, exhibitions of amazing skill at top speed—the avoidance of calamity—the swift escape from danger.

The Roman liked to see the hell licked out of the proud; he liked to see them go down under. The Alexandrine, because he was Greek and an individualist, liked to see the

best man win. It was danger, not death, that the Greek enjoyed; he was treacherous, volatile, seditious, unfaithful—he had lots of unsocial qualities; he loved to create danger, but even more than that he loved to see someone triumph over it. He was a far better sportsman than the Roman, take him on the whole, and I believe that is one of the principal reasons why Greece has had more influence than Rome, despite Rome's military achievements.

THE Wise Man of Peshawar is an old friend of Perry Adams, who says:

Sweetness and light are notably absent from my story in this issue, "Cowards Are Bravest." As our editor put it, "It's pretty grim." Exactly.

This yarn was inspired by the recent remark of a very pretty lady, who, charming soul, apparently entertained the idea that soldiering on India's Northwest Frontier was all one grand picnic—a sort of perpetual carnival of exotic romance, with bands playing, flags flying; and the dashing hero, after performing prodigies of valor, galloping home with the bacon. Well, as I told her, often he does; but the reality is apt to be far different. And thinking *how* different it could be, I wrote this story for her eyes.

A true story? No piece of fiction is ever entirely true. Rather, incidents are assembled and moulded to serve the writer's purpose, so that he may to the best of his ability, work out his predetermined theme. Valpy is a composite: what he did, what happened to him, is founded on fact; the real-life character, so far as I know, had no complex concerning bodily mutilation at tribal hands. That strange, ever-present fear was in the head of another officer entirely. Here I combined the two men for obvious reasons.

Yet my mouthpiece, The Wise Man of Peshawar, is a very real person. Nothing fictional about him. He is, let me whisper, at this minute one of the most senior generals in India, resplendent in red tabs and the rest of it.

We first met far from the Frontier—at Poona, in fact, home of Indian Signal Service. Every unit in the country, British and Indian, contributed to this strange melting pot. A veritable Tower of Babel, with this essential difference: all men sent there had one thing in common—they were qualified signallers in their original units. The Wise Man was then a captain; I, a private. Presently we found ourselves in a newly formed Divisional Signal Company. The Wise Man, commanding it, became a major and made me a corporal.

My specialized work brought me in constant contact with him; gradually I came to know him as typifying all the best qualities of that splendid body of officers who so faithfully serve the Raj. For the privilege of continuing near him, I'd much rather have remained an N. C. O.; but he insisted that I take a commission and so for a time we drifted apart, while I was taught my new job.

Recently it occurred to me that I couldn't do better than employ The Wise Man of Peshawar as my story-telling spokesman; and having introduced him with the present narrative, I hope to "see" a good many future stories of India through his eyes.

HOW many outlaw horses are reclaimed? Frank W. Ryan of Brookline, Massachusetts, tells us of one case.

"Jim Jeffries and Dumb Julius" was one of the most interesting stories I've struck in a long time.

And speaking of outlaw horses, I wonder how many of them are ever reclaimed? Some years ago I ran across a case—one of those big Roman-nosed sorrels—that seemed to indicate possibilities. He had been condemned by the Regular army, bought for a song by a national guard outfit and was about as vicious and dangerous as any one could want. Reputation of a man-killer, and no one was anxious to try him out as he was.

There happened to be a quiet, stolid chap there, who was no fancy rider but had a lot of patience and understood animals. He worked on that horse—following the theory that the poor devil just had a grouch against the human race for good reason; and that he could be won back. He was right and certainly proved—in that instance at least—that a square deal, trust and friendship could do what rough-stuff never would. The horse turned out gentle, dependable and a thoroughly good sport; though always a bad one for any nit-wit to abuse—for he would have died fighting rather than to submit to injustice.

ON the same subject, Mark C. Turney of Elgin, Arizona, backs around and lets both hoofs fly. It is only fair, in printing this letter, to mention that Knibbs is a Western man who has owned and ridden horses all of his life.

I will bet you thirty cents Henry Herbert Knibbs never saw a horse. His story, "The Rogue," is a pure case of nature faking. A

mare, no matter how wild, does not desert her foal except when closely pursued. A colt that is so badly crippled it will let a man get down off his horse and tie it, cannot jump up and fight when it is untied. Nor could it go on its own power to the home corral. Johnny Vail, nor any other Johnny, could carry a two-month-old colt on his horse. A colt two months old would starve to death in a short time if turned in a pasture to make its own living.

I have been with horses almost every day for the past fifty years, and I have never seen anything Mr. Knibbs describes. I have broken many mustangs. Very few of them even buck when caught, but depend almost entirely on running away from their enemy, the man on horse-back. They are no more afraid of the man on foot than any other unbroken horse.

GORDON MAC CREAGH writes to make clear what he said and did not say about the evil-tempered black panthers.

A comment re the argument about black panthers in June 15th Camp-Fire.

Of course spotted panthers sometimes produce blacks. I never said or intimated or allowed room for any suspicion that spots don't produce blacks.

Sure they do; plenty. These are the freaks, the sports. They grow as big as Mommer.

But Carl Hagenbeck noticed that certain black panthers were smaller than the general run, and that these smaller ones always seemed to have certain marked characteristics —vicious temper being only one of them. On that basis he conceived the idea that these might be a different species, and spent a lot of money trying to establish yes or no.

BUT Dr. Louis C. Mullikin, of Los Angeles, California, got one of the black devils to let him scratch its head.

This note is about an experience I had along about the time Adventure had its birth. I was a resident of the Bronx and went to the Bronx Zoo two or three times a week. I have always been a lover of cats, alley or otherwise, and for many years carried a bag of catnip leaves in my pocket to give any I saw in my wanderings.

Most of my time at the Zoo was spent in the Cat House. In the center of the row of cages was one that contained a black panther. I used to feed him an extra bit of catnip. I fed them all, by placing a bunch about the size of a small marble in a sheet of tissue paper, rolling it up and tossing it into the cage, and then the "catniption" fits would start. At first the black would just stand at the bars and glare at me as I stood and talked to him. I kept this up for several months without ever seeing him even sniffing at the balls of paper I tossed him, and then I noticed that every time I came into the house I would see him glaring at me no matter which door I entered.

One day the paper broke almost under his nose and I saw him lick up the catnip. A few days later, as I threw the usual amount in the cage, I heard a voice behind me say, "Just what are you giving those cats?" "Just a little catnip." "Humph! I was wondering what was making these cats so damned tame."

I continued to carry on for about a year or so, and before the end of that time I actually scratched the black panther's head as he lay against the bars. I do not know whether he was as vicious as most of them or not, but thought I would leave it up to Gordon MacCreagh to solve.

Incidentally, "Old Sultan," in a cage just outside the door, would put on a catniption fit that collected crowds and delighted the children for about an hour at a time.

For some reason the cats here in California do not respond to catnip, at least that has been my experience here for the past fifteen years.

MORE good suggestions come about about the twenty-fifth anniversary issue of November first. More are on hand, more arrive each day, and I hope there are more still to be written.

The most fascinating and best written novelette ever published in *Adventure* was "L'Atlantide" in the early '20s or late teens.

If none other were to be published in your 25th Anniversary Number "L'Atlantide" (a Sahara desert and Egyptian story by a French author, I believe, which later won a literature rating and prize) would make that November 1st issue a worthy special.

—F. C. Ness, Associate Editor,
The American Rifleman, Washington, D. C.

My husband has bought *Adventure* for over twenty years, except for that brief period when you thought you could let it

down into an ordinary pulp. Glad to see that you've decided to keep it a gentleman. (!)

We are strong for the old-time authors—Gordon Young, Captain Dingle, Tuttle, Pendexter, etc.

Do certainly have a bit of flag waving for the 25th anniversary, with a reprinting of some old favorites. We have often wished that we'd saved a howlingly funny story about two American sailors ashore (I think in Constantinople or thereabouts); they got the idea that they'd like to see the inside of a harem. But I don't remember the author; the story probably appeared at least 15 years ago, but the memory of it lingers. My husband particularly likes the "Hashknife" stories.

—"The Missus," Stratford, Conn.

I have one story in mind, the story that really made me an *Adventure* addict. It was called "Too Tough to Kill," was written by J. D. Newsom. I may say also that of all the stories I have read in *Adventure* up to a year ago that is the only story whose title and author I still remember as well as a few of the details. And of course the 25th anniversary issue would be incomplete without a good long letter from Arthur Sullivant Hoffman.

Before closing let me bring up another matter that has been bothering me for some time. Can we expect a rise in price soon? Or can't we? Please end this suspense of waiting for the announcement to appear that *Adventure* is going back to its old size.

—John Kantor, Elizabeth, N. J.

One story started me reading *Adventure* about 1911. It was "Cupid and the Crook" and the author was William Cochrane, who wrote quite a few stories around the same character.

Also notice you have the "Off the Trail" stories again, some of those might come in for consideration. One sticks out in my memory also, "The Web of the Sun," a tall tale of a gigantic spider in South America, date and author forgotten now.

—Harold R. Shaw, New York City.

To pick high points from twenty-five years of high going! "A. S. H." could probably assist. I would certainly like to see a story by Arthur O. Friel—most any one.

—V. A. Masengil, Eugene, Oregon.

I would suggest, and let the reason for so suggesting bear me out,—W. C. Tuttle's first story in *Adventure*.

As Tut told me the story some years ago, in the main dining room of the Davenport Hotel in Spokane, he read a blurb on a story to run in *Adventure*, which A. S. H. called "the funniest story he had ever published."

On reading the tale, Tut said that he could write a funnier tale than that himself.

And he did. And Piperock was born.

To those of us who have smiled, (or chortled) over Dirty Shirt and Magpie and Tellurium and all that goofy galaxy—this tale, with a historical editorial note, should prove more than deserving in its honored place in an Anniversary issue.

—Geo. M. Walker, New York City.

This is my first letter since 1920, so you will not be due for another blast from me until 1950. I will be much disappointed if every one on my first list is not included and will fly into a frenzy if you don't have a "Paradise and Piperock" story.

Here is my suggestion for the Anniversary Number. I don't see how you can possibly omit *any* of these names as they *made Adventure* and have since become outstanding as magazine writers. It looks to me as though you would have to make the issue at least 250 pages.

Tuttle—Paradise and Piperock story.
Lamb—Crusades or Cossacks.
Mundy—Jimgrim.
Nason—World War.
Surdez—Foreign Legion.
Friel—Upper Orinoco.
Nicholson—Vladivostok.
Bedford-Jones—Irish freebooter on coast of Morocco. Ditto in W. I.
Pendexter—Pre-revolution years in Kentucky and Ohio.

You can't argue about these, *can* you? Now, how are you going to leave out the following?

Ared White—World War Spies.
Simpson—Slave Coast (Best since E. Wallace's "Sanders of the River.")
MacCreagh—Kingi B'wana.
Pat Green—S. Africa.
Gordon Young—South Seas.
Wetjen—Sea Story.
T. Burtis—Aviation.
Ellsberg—Submarines.

[This reader, from Detroit, Michigan, who asks me not to use his name, is a veteran of the Foreign Legion, Lafayette Escadrille, and the staff of an American division.]

No greater evidence can be furnished of the tremendous part played by *Adventure*

than in the service rendered by *Ask Adventure*. Take my own share of the work—and I am only one of the 101 and then some *A. A.* answers: My first *A. A.* answer regarding New Zealand and the South Seas bore the date August 3, 1917. In those 18 years I have answered no fewer than 739 A. A. inquiries—and they have come from all the ends of the earth, testifying to the wide circulation of your magazine. *Adventure* by name—adventurer by circulation!

I would like to suggest for your Silver Jubilee number that you reprint in the two November issues the *first* stories written for *Adventure* by Dr. Cochrane, Gordon Young, H. Bedford-Jones, Talbot Mundy, and Tuttle, yea and His Knibbs. That's all. May your circulation go up and up until the doctor asks you what you're going to do about it.

—Tom L. Mills, Feilding, New Zealand.

Just a word about the Anniversary Number and those old stories. It was one of Tuttle's Piperock stories that made the boys look at *Adventure*. I haven't missed many since. I will mention one of his that for me stands first of a lot that were all good. "A Misdeal."

Next I will say Leonard H. Nason's, "A Stag at Eve." Then "Mud," by Robert Simpson, and fourth on my list, Norman Springer in "Freedom's Last Stand."

—E. G. Rogers, Orlando, Florida.

I'd like to put in a nomination for your request number of stories from past *Adventures*. This is a short story by Thomas McMorrow, published around 1921 or '22; as usual with requesters, I forget the title, but it was, I am sure, the first, perhaps the only, story McMorrow ever had in *Adventure* (his first published anywhere, I think) about a prize-fight manager who discovered a dumb slugger who could have been champion of the world if he could have imagined any larger sum than twenty-five dollars.

—Elmer Davis, Mystic, Connecticut.

I was glad to read that you're going to put out an Anniversary Number of your magazine, and am wondering if we'll get a reprint of a story by J. Allan Dunn called "Barehanded Castaways." Personally, I consider this one of the best stories of its kind I've ever read.

—C. V. Brinson, Los Angeles, California.

I hope we'll get a chance to see "Salt of the Sea," by J. Allan Dunn.

I'm sure many others of your women readers, as well as the men, would get a kick out of it.

—Genevieve McAllister, Hollywood, Calif.

I once drove 40 miles to get a copy, a few years ago in Texas. I would like to see a reprint of "*Riley Grannan's Last Adventure*" in your anniversary number. Of the many fine stories *Adventure* has printed, that one stands out in my memory. I read it in *Adventure* twice before.

—Pete Ham, Abilene, Kansas.

THE problem of what to put in our anniversary number grows larger and larger. A complete set of bound volumes from the first issue would seem to cover the ground in a way satisfactory to every one, and lacking this, some of you are bound to be disappointed. But we do want to make it a good anniversary, as representative of the likes of all of you as we can contrive.

For myself, there is another problem: if I put in this author, leave out that one, what then? There's peril in this anniversary idea.

It's our hope to have *Adventure* grow in size and price. Times being what they are, this should be done slowly and carefully, feeling our way. But that is the goal.

The anniversary number may be too soon to make that jump, probably is, but we're figuring costs of extra pages, etc., at least for that issue.

And a gentleman named Arthur Sullivant Hoffman, who for seventeen years edited *Adventure* into a world-wide following, remains to be drawn out of retirement and consulted, persuaded or forced somehow to edit that issue or at any rate conduct this Camp-Fire, or if he has not the time, at least to be the leading speaker when the logs go on the fire for that session of flame and smoke.

—H. B.

ASK ADVENTURE

Information you can't get elsewhere

WHEN the deeps were really uncharted, the ancients had ingenious methods of finding their way about.

Request:—I should like some information on ancient forms of navigation, especially the method used by the ancient South Sea Islanders.

Did the Phoenicians have a system of finding their location on the water, or did they merely follow the coastline?

Can you tell me the name of a book, or books, which would give me these details?

—WARREN T. MCCREADY,
s.s. *John D. Archibold*, New York, N. Y.

Reply by Mr. Charles Hall:—A few of the ancient astronomers knew that the world was round and had a method of getting their latitude. As far as I know, however, most navigators made coast voyages. They had manuscript books which listed headlands and harbors.

Some of the Sandwich Islanders used a bowl with holes in it to define the waterlevel. Looking through one of these holes, the rim on the opposite side gave them the altitude of the pole star, corresponding to the latitude of their home.

The next time you are in port, go up to the library and dig through the Encyclopaedia Britannica. You will find quite an article on navigation there.

SPRINKLE with gunshot and season to taste.

Request—Can you give a beginner advice on how to clean and cook quail, ducks, rabbits and deer?

Where can I purchase egg powder? How much does it cost?

—JOHN STONIS, Santa Paula, Calif.

Reply by Paul M. Fink:—My method of dressing quail is to cut off the head, wings and feet, and then skin the bird. Cup open along the backbone and remove the entrails. Some prefer to pluck the bird and leave the skin on, but I've never found sufficient advantages in this to justify the effort. They are best cooked by broiling in a heavy iron skillet, using only a small amount of grease. When almost done add a handful of flour, for four or five birds, and when this is browned pour in a cupful of water, cover with a lid and let steam until done.

Ducks are plucked, some times dry but often scalded to make the feathers come out easier. The heavy down makes it hard for the water to penetrate, though. When picked, draw by cutting along the back of the neck and removing the crop. Then cut from the lower end of the breastbone to and around the vent and remove the entrails through this. Bake or roast in a moderate oven for about three-quarters of an hour, basting frequently.

Cut off the head and feet of rabbits and skin out. Cut off the legs and divide the back into two or three pieces. Fry, or broil as directed for quail.

Deer is dressed very much as one would do a calf, hanging it up by the feet before disemboweling or skinning. If the head is to be saved as a trophy remove this first, to save it from blood stains. If there is no desire to save the head the job is easier done by hanging head-up. Save the liver (deer has no gall-bladder), the heart and kidneys. The choicest parts of the carcass are the hams and the saddle. Venison can be fried, broiled, roasted—any way you would prepare beef.

Egg powder can be gotten from many of the larger grocery stores or delicatessens. If not, you can order it from Abercrombie & Fitch, Madison Avenue and 45th St., New York, or Abercrombie's Camp, 311 Broadway,

New York. The price will be about forty cents, plus postage, for a quarter-pound can equal to about a dozen eggs.

JUST a legal question of "hot and continuous pursuit" which makes the bootlegger a speedy runner.

Request:—According to a newspaper article in the *New York Journal*, there is a fleet loaded with aliens, drugs, and liquors, twenty miles off the Jersey coast.

Now it seems to me that I remember reading somewhere or other that "constituted authority" can stop and search any vessel on the high seas. If so, how can this fleet be anchored off our shores?

Another thing I don't quite understand is the law of hot pursuit. Can you explain to me what this law is?

—T. Amodeo, Brooklyn, N. Y.

Reply by Lieut. Comdr. V. C. Bixby:—The answers to both of your questions are well defined under International Law. In time of peace a government vessel may not stop or search a suspected vessel on the high seas except for piracy or trading in slaves. The high seas include all waters outside the territorial limits which has always been, until recently, three miles from the shore line. A year or so ago the United States, because of the bootlegging, declared a ten-mile limit, which raised much protest. Should one of these suspected vessels send one of her small boats within the territorial limits the parent vessel would be subject to seizure. Therefore, as long as these vessels in question stay outside the limit, do not send their small boats inside, do not commit acts of piracy or deal in slavery, they are safe from search or seizure.

The doctrine of "hot or continuous pursuit" is as follows: should a vessel violate the laws of the United States while within the territorial limits, she would subject herself to pursuit, seizure and return to port by a government vessel, provided the pursuit was continuous. A temporary delay due to stress of weather does not invalidate the pursuit and seizure on the high seas.

The following case will illustrate both of your questions. Several years ago a Coast Guard fired on and sunk a rum-runner flying the Canadian flag in the Gulf of Mexico. Her name, at present, slips my memory. The Coast Guard claimed that this boat was inside the territorial waters engaged in violating the United States laws and that the Coast Guard was in "hot pursuit" and that the vessel resisted capture. The vessel claimed that she was not and had not been within the territorial limits. The Coast Guard could not prove her case and the United States paid damages.

You can find these points illustrated in any good book on International Law in the Public Library.

AN American from Salem has a shrine to his memory on the battlefields at Ningpo, China.

Request:—I wonder if you will have the goodness to give me some information? Vaguely, I have contended that "Chinese Gordon" was not the first to organize the Chinese, but that he was preceded in this work by an American, who divided his time between the task of saving China from anarchy, and working as a gardener at one of his legations. Equally vaguely, I seem to have heard that this American is more or less deified, and that shrines to his memory still exist in some parts of China.

At the same time I should be glad to know of any literature on this subject.

—A. E. Anson, Duarte, Calif.

Reply by Mr. Seward Cramer:—You are ninety per cent right in your contention. The main point is that there was an American that preceded Gordon in the unification of the Chinese. However, he was nothing as prosaic as a gardener at one of the legations. He was the captain of a Chinese merchant ship plying Chinese waters.

Frederick Townsend Ward was born in Salem, Mass., in 1831. He went to sea when he was very young and served in South America with Garibaldi when he was only fifteen. He was a born adventurer and loved getting in tight places. He tried for West Point but failed and when he was twenty sailed for China.

The Taipings had started their activities in the early 1850's and by 1859 they had made great headway and were pretty supreme in China, particularly along the Yangtze. There was even talk of foreign nations recognizing them as the actual rulers of China. The Taipings made a great mistake by not admitting the "Little Swords" (a semi-Masonic organization) into their company. Such an admission would have secured a seaport for the Taipings as the "Little Swords" practically controlled Shanghai.

Ward offered his services to the Imperial forces but the American officials objected to this and he was arrested. He broke prison and was hired by a Chinese banking firm to drive the Taipings out of Sungkiang, a small city to the south of Shanghai. His first attempt failed but he realized that he could succeed if he had a small trained army. With about a hundred Filippinos and a few American officers, he again attacked Sungkiang and routed the Taipings. He was wounded in this encounter and spent some time convalescing.

This time was not wasted, though, as he perfected his plans for a large, unified, well-trained army. This army was very different from the beachcombers he led first in 1859. It conquered everything in its path and soon came to be known as the "Ever Victorious Army" throughout China. Ward led this army against Ningpo in 1862. He was killed while scaling the walls. His body was brought back to Sungkiang and there it rests today.

The Imperial Government gave him the posthumous rank of Brigadier-General and ordered the erection of two shrines to his memory. The first at Ningpo where he was killed and the second at Sungkiang, the scene of his first victory and the training of his army.

Ward has never had the recognition that he deserves. For every thousand that knows "Chinese" Gordon, I doubt if one knows Ward. Yet Ward did all the hard work and Gordon merely carried out his program. Ward loved the Chinese and was loved by them. Gordon never got along with them. Such is the way of fame!

I trust that you will pardon the delay in answering your request but I have been trying to find what books are still in print. I can only find two on Ward:

Vol. XLIV of Historical Collection of Essex Institute, Salem, Mass.

Williams, Edward T.—China, Yesterday and Today. In the twentieth chapter, he gives a short sketch of Ward.

If you are interested in Charles George Gordon, I might recommend the following:

Achmed Abdullah & T. C. Pakenham—Dreamers of Empire.

Allen, B. M.—Gordon in China.

Allen, C. H.—Life of Chinese Gordon.

Strachey, Lytton—Eminent Victorians.

Wortham, Hugh E.—Chinese Gordon.

I trust that I have helped you. If there is anything more, please don't hesitate to write. It is too bad that the writings of the Jesuits are not available as they would give everything.

CHLOROFORM cattle ticks—don't behead them.

Request:—I am located here in the Kiamicki Mountains in Southeastern Oklahoma, where the ticks are quite a pest. I do not know the right name of this species. The natives call them "cow ticks" and "wood ticks" indiscriminately. They are a dark brown in color with a small white spot in the center of the back. If they are permitted to remain on too long, the head detaches when the tick is pulled off, and causes quite a sore spot which itches for several weeks. This is a painful pest, and any information as to "dope" to keep them away would be appreciated.

—Frank C. Poling, Wilburton, Okla.

Reply by Dr. S. W. Frost:—The ticks to which you refer are known by various common names such as "wood ticks," cow ticks" and "cattle ticks." The common species is known to science as *Boophilus annulatus*. They are usually abundant in woods, especially places where cattle or other hosts frequent. They rest upon the foliage and wait for man or cattle to pass, when they bridge the gap and crawl upon their host.

If they are discovered soon after they have crawled upon the body, they can be removed easily but they soon attach themselves and are very difficult to remove. They sink their proboscis or beak, which is barbed, into the skin and, as you remark, the beak or head is broken off when one tries to remove them by force. If the ticks have become attached, it is well to use a little chloroform on a small piece of cotton and apply this to the tick for a few seconds. This will cause the tick to release its hold on the body and it can be removed more easily. The ticks then can be readily removed by using a piece of adhesive tape and pressing it against them. They adhere to the adhesive tape which can be rolled up and discarded as it becomes filled with ticks.

Numerous repellents have been tried for ticks but none have proven satisfactory. Deticking as described above is the simplest way of avoiding difficulty. You should make this a regular practice when returning from a tick-infested woods. Care should be taken also to park your clothing outside the house so that you do not become reinfested on a subsequent day by wearing clothes infested by ticks. As a rule ticks will leave the clothing if they are hung upon a line in the open sun.

SUGAR for fuel will be effective—if not efficient.

Request:—First: I am planning to write a story which employs a trick solution. It has to do with a shipping board freighter which exhausts her coal supply off Malin Head in heavy weather. The story is based on actual experiences. In the story I intended to solve the predicament by having the skipper order an apparently non-combustible cargo used as fuel. In my sea-going days we once had a sugar cargo ignite due to spontaneous combustion. (We had cattle in the 'tween decks and it was a hell of a mess.) The question is would refined sugar support a hot fire if utilized under forced draft?

Second: I have listened to endless arguments in the saloon regarding the reputed tendency of a ship to log fewer miles when bucking a current than when running with it. I am referring to the actual speed through the water as shown on the taffrail log. As a matter of fact as the average air speed is greater when the ship is running with the current it would appear that slightly greater shaft speed would be required to maintain the same water speed.

—W. G. McConnel, Leonia, N. J.

Reply by Commander Edward Ellsberg:—Sugar is combustible, but a poor fuel. Less than half its weight is available in the form of carbon to support combustion. Mechanically also, it is rotten stuff to burn on a grate, as it is so fine that it will spoil the draft. However, as you suggest, if a strong forced draft is attainable, care is used not to get too thick a bed of sugar, and a good layer of ash is left on the grate bars so that all the sugar doesn't run through, you can get away with it for story purposes. As a practical matter, I may say that if I were actually in that predicament, I'm sure the ship would get in burning sugar.

About the taffrail log. So far as the log is concerned, all the rotator knows is the speed with which the water moves past it, and it is a matter of indifference to it whether that velocity comes from a current or from the ship's speed. However, it is always difficult accurately to estimate either the speed or set of a current; and the patent log may as well be blamed for errors in judgment as anything else. It is possible, however, that where the current is appreciable, the current near the surface, in which the rotator is working, may not be the mean effective current between surface and keel which the ship herself has to buck, and consequently the normal relation between rotations of the log and rotations of the propeller is destroyed, with a resultant discrepancy in readings.

THE place of noxious gases in the great war—and in the future.

Request:—Were any of the poison gases used in the World War capable of causing immediate death?

Did the best gasmasks used in the war give protection from all poison gas?

Were any gas attacks made by airplanes dropping gas bombs?

Do you believe that poison gas will be used extensively in the future?

—Robert L. Williams, Atlanta, Ga.

Reply by Mr. Beda von Berchem:—No, there were no poison gases during the World War which caused immediate death. The first gas used during the World War was a plain chlorine gas and I'm not going to open up the old argument as to who used it first, the French or the Germans. The Germans used it in Flanders on the British and the results were horrid. The victims died after an hour's suffering. However, later during the war, German chemists devised a somewhat deadlier gas, but that lethal weapon did not kill outright either. Mustard gas merely burned, but did not kill.

Yes, most gasmasks devised after 1915 gave complete protection. I say this with reservations, however, because a lot depended on the chemicals used in the respirator box of the gas mask. In some cases those chemicals were not fresh and had deteriorated, for which reason they did not protect the wearer.

There were a few isolated attempts made by either side of dropping gas bombs from airplanes. As a whole this procedure was not very effective.

In a future war, poison gas will play a principal role. You probably are aware of the fact that the United States Army has special gas troops, the Chemical Warfare Service! All of the great Powers pay attention to the possibility of the use of poison gas in future warfare. While in our Service the gas to be used will put a man out of action without killing. Other Powers are said to have devised deadly gases, invisible, tasteless ones.

The gas masks issued at the present time to our troops and animals are very effective. What should be done, is to teach our civilian population to use them properly, for, God knows, they may need them soon enough.

THE ASK ADVENTURE SERVICE is free, provided self-addressed envelope and FULL POSTAGE for reply are enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries must enclose International Reply Coupons, which are exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.

Send each question *direct* to the expert in charge of the section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. **Do Not** send questions to this magazine. Be definite; explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question. The magazine does not assume any responsibility.

No Reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing or for employment.

★*(Enclose addressed envelope with International Reply Coupon.)*

ASK ADVENTURE EXPERTS

SPORTS AND HOBBIES

Archery—EARL B. POWELL, care of *Adventure.*

Baseball—FREDERICK LIEB, 250 Bronxville Rd., Bronxville, N. Y.

Camping—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Boxing—CAPT. JEAN V. GROMBACH, 113 W. 57th St., N. Y. C.

Canoeing: *paddling, sailing, cruising, regattas*—EDGAR S. PERKINS, 161 W. Harrison St., Chicago, Ill.

Coins: *and medals*—HOWLAND WOOD, American Numismatic Society, Broadway at 156th St., N. Y. C.

Dogs—JOHN B. THOMPSON, care of *Adventure.*

Fencing—CAPT. JEAN V. GROMBACH, 113 W. 57th St., N. Y. C.

First Aid—DR. CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, care of *Adventure.*

Fishing: *salt and fresh water; fly and bait casting; bait; camping outfits; fishing trips*—JOHN B. THOMPSON, (Ozark Ripley), care of *Adventure.*

Football—JOHN B. FOSTER, American Sports Pub. Co., 45 Rose St., N. Y. C.

Globe-trotting and vagabonding—ROBERT SPIERS-BENJAMIN, 1177 East 15th St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

Health Building Activities, Hiking—DR. CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, care of *Adventure.*

Horses: *care, breeding, training of horses in general; hunting; jumping; and polo; horses of old and new West*—MAJOR THOMAS H. DAMERON, 1709 Berkley Ave., Pueblo, Calif.

Motor Boating—GERALD T. WHITE, Montville, N. J.

Motor Camping—MAJOR CHAS. G. PERCIVAL, M.D., 152 W. 65th St., New York City.

Motorcycling—*regulations, mechanics, racing*—CHARLES M. DODGE, 108 Winthrop Rd., Brookline, Mass.

Mountain Climbing—THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, Yosemite, Calif.

Old Songs—ROBERT FROTHINGHAM, 995 Pine St., San Francisco, Calif.

Old-Time Sailoring—CHAS. H. HALL, 446 Ocean Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y.

Oriental Magic and Effects—JULIEN PROSKAUER, 148 Lafayette St., New York, N. Y.

Rifles, Pistols, Revolvers: *foreign and American*—DONEGAN WIGGINS, R. F. D. No. 3, Box 69, Salem, Oregon.

Shotguns: *foreign and American makes; wing shooting*—JOHN B. THOMPSON, care of *Adventure.*

★**Skiing and Snowshoeing**—W. H. PRICE, 3436 Mance St., Montreal, Quebec.

Small Boating: *skiffs, outboard, small launch, river and lake cruising*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif.

Soccer—MR. BEDA VON BERCHEM, care of *Adventure.*

Stamps—DR. H. A. DAVIS, The American Philatelic Society, 3421 Colfax Avenue, Denver, Colo.

Swimming—LOUIS DEB. HANDLEY, 115 West 11th St., N. Y. C.

Swords: *spears, pole arms and armor*—CAPT. R. E. GARDNER, 134 N. 4th St., Columbus, Ohio.

Tournament Fly and Bait Casting—H. B. STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Maine.

Track—JACKSON SCHOLZ, Box 163, Jenkintown, Pa.

Woodcraft—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Wrestling—CHARLES B. CRANFORD, School of Education, New York University, Washington Square, New York, N. Y.

Yachting—A. R. KNAUER, 2722 E. 75th Pl., Chicago, Ill.

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL SUBJECTS

Anthropology: *American; north of the Panama Canal; customs, dress, architecture, pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions*—ARTHUR WOODWARD, Los Angeles Museum, Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Calif.

Automobiles and Aircraft Engines: *design, operation and maintenance*—EDMUND B. NEIL, care of *Adventure.*

Aviation: *airplanes, airships, airways and landing fields, contests, aero clubs, insurance, laws, licenses, operating data, schools, foreign activities, publications, parachute gliders*—MAJOR FALK HARMEL, 709 Longfellow St., Washington, D. C.

Big Game Hunting: *guides and equipment*—ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass.

Entomology: *insects and spiders; venomous and disease-carrying insects*—DR. S. W. FROST, Arendtsville, Pa.

Ethnology: (*Eskimo*)—VICTOR SHAW, Loring, Alaska.

Forestry: *in the United States; national forests of the Rocky Mountain States*—ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass.

Tropical Forestry: *tropical forests and products*—WM. R. BARBOUR, Box 575, Rio Piedras, Porto Rico.

Fur Farming—FRED L. BOWDEN, 104 Fairview Ave., Binghamton, New York.

Herpetology: *reptiles and amphibians*—CLIFFORD H. POPE, care of *Adventure.*

Marine Architecture: *ship modeling*—CHAS. H. HALL, 446 Ocean Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y.

Mining: *territory anywhere in North America. Mining law, prospecting outfitting; any mineral, metallic or nonmetallic*—VICTOR SHAW, Loring, Alaska.

Motor Vehicles: *operation, legislative restrictions and traffic*—EDMUND B. NEIL, care of *Adventure.*

Ornithology: *birds; their habits and distribution*—DAVIS QUINN, 3548 Tryon Ave., Bronx, N. Y.

Photography: *outfitting, work in out-of-the-way places, general information*—PAUL L. ANDERSON, 36 Washington St., East Orange, N. J.

Precious and semi-precious stones: *cutting and polishing of gem materials; technical information*—F. J. ESTERLIN, 901-902 Shreve Bldg., 210 Post Road, San Francisco, Calif.

Radio: *telegraphy, telephony, history, broadcasting, apparatus, invention, receiver construction, portable sets*—DONALD MCNICOL, 132 Union Road, Roselle Park, N. J.

Railroads: *in the United States, Mexico and Canada*—R. T. NEWMAN, 701 N. Main St., Paris, Ill.

Sawmilling—HAPSBURG LIEBE, care of *Adventure.*

Sunken Treasure: *salvaging and diving*—COMDR. EDWARD ELLSBERG, U. S. N. R., care of *Adventure.*

Taxidermy—SETH BULLOCK, care of *Adventure.*

MILITARY, NAVAL AND POLICE SUBJECTS

Army Matters: *United States and Foreign*—CAPT. GLEN R. TOWNSEND, 5511 Cabanna Ave., St. Louis, Mo.

Federal Investigation Activities: *Secret Service, etc.*—FRANCIS H. BENT, 251 Third St, Fair Haven, N. J.

Navy Matters: *United States and Foreign*—LT. COMDR. VERNON C. BIXBY, U. S. N. (retired), P. O. Box 588, Orlando, Fla.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police—PATRICK LEE, 11 Franklin Pl., Great Neck, Long Is., N. Y.

Police, City and State—FRANCIS H. BENT, 251 Third St., Fair Haven, N. J.

U. S. Coast Guard—COMDR. VERNON C. BIXBY, U.S.N. (ret.), P. O. Box 588, Orlando, Florida.

U. S. Marine Corps—CAPT. F. W. HOPKINS, R. F. D. 1, Box 614, La Canada, Calif.

World War: *strategy, tactics, leaders, armies, participants, historical and political background*—BEDA VON BERCHEM, care of *Adventure.*

GEOGRAPHICAL SUBJECTS

The Sea, Part 1 *British and American waters, ships, seamen, statistics, record, oceans, waterways, seas, islands. Atlantic and Indian Oceans, Cape Horn, Magellan Straits, Mediterranean Sea, Islands and Coasts.*—COMDR. EDWARD ELLSBERG, U.S.N.R., care of *Adventure.* ★**2** *Antarctica*—F. LEONARD MARSLAND, care of The Agent General for Queensland, Queensland House, The Strand, London, W. C. 2, England.

Philippine Islands—BUCK CONNER, Quartzsite, Ariz., care Conner Field.

★**New Guinea**—E. P. B. ARMIT, Port Moresby, Territory Papua, via Sydney, Australia.

★**New Zealand; Cook Island, Samoa**—TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star,* Feilding, New Zealand.

★**Australia and Tasmania**—ALAN FOLEY, 18a Sandridge St., Bondi, Sydney, Australia.

★**South Sea Islands**—WILLIAM MCCREADIE, "Cardross," Suva, Fiji.

Asia, Part 1 ★*Siam, Malay States, Straits Settlements, Java, Sumatra, Dutch East Indies*—V. B. WINDLE, care of *Adventure.* **2** *French Indo-China, Hong Kong, Macao, Tibet, Southern, Eastern and Central China*—SEWARD S. CRAMER, care of *Adventure.* **3** *Northern China and Mongolia*—PAUL H. FRANSON, Bldg. No. 3 Veterans Administration Facility, Minneapolis, Minn. **4** *Japan*—OSCAR E. RILEY, 4 Huntingdon Ave., Scarsdale, N. Y. **5** *Persia, Arabia*—CAPTAIN BEVERLY-GIDDINGS, care of *Adventure.* **6** ★*Palestine*—CAPT. H. W. EADES, 3808 26th Ave., West, Vancouver, B. C.

Africa, Part 1 ★*Egypt, Tunis, Algeria, Anglo-Egyptian Sudan.*—CAPT. H. W. EADES, 3808 26th Ave., West, Vancouver, B. C. **2** *Abyssinia, Italian Somaliland, British Somali Coast Protectorate, Eritrea, Uganda, Tanganyika, Kenya.*—GORDON MAC CREAGH, Box 197, Centerport, Long Island, N. Y. **3** *Tripoli, Sahara, caravans.*—CAPTAIN BEVERLY-GIDDINGS, care of *Adventure.* **4** *Morocco.*—GEORGE E. HOLT, care of *Adventure.* **5** *Sierra Leone to Old Calabar, West Africa, Nigeria.*—N. E. NELSON, Firestone Plantations Co., Akron, Ohio. **6** *Cape Colony, Orange River Colony, Natal, Zululand, Transvaal, and Rhodesia.*—CAPT. F. J. FRANKLIN, Adventure Camp, Simi, Calif. **7** ★*Portuguese East.*—R. G. WARING, Corunna, Ont., Canada. **8** ★*Bechuanaland, Southwest Africa, Angola, Belgian Congo, Egyptian Sudan and French West Africa.*—MAJOR S. L. GLENISTER, 24 Cuba St., Havana, Cuba.

Madagascar—RALPH LINTON, 324 Sterling Hall, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wis.

Europe, Part 1 *Denmark, Germany*—G. I. COLBURN, East Ave., New Canaan, Conn. **2** *The Balkans: Jugoslavia, Rumania, Bulgaria, Albania, Greece and Turkey. The Austrian Succession States: Czechoslovakia, Austria, Hungary—History, customs, travel.*—BEDA VON BERCHEM, care of *Adventure.*

South America, Part 1 *Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, and Chile.*—EDGAR YOUNG, care of *Adventure.* **2** *Venezuela, The Guianas, Uruguay, Paraguay, Argentina, and Brazil.*—DR. PAUL VANORDEN SHAW, 414 W. 121st St., N. Y. C.

★**West Indies**—JOHN B. LEFFINGWELL, Box 1333, Nueva Gerona, Isle of Pines, Cuba.

Central America—SEYMOUR POND, care of *Adventure.*

Mexico, Part 1 ★*Northern Border States.*—J. W. WHITEAKER, 2903 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex. **2** *Quintana Roo, Yucatan, Campeche.*—W. RUSSELL SHEETS, 301 Poplar Ave., Takoma Prk., Md. **3** ★*South of line from Tampico to Mazatlan.*—JOHN NEWMAN PAGE, Sureno Carranza 16, Cuautla, Morelos, Mexico.

Newfoundland—C. T. JAMES, Box 2064, St. John's, Newfoundland.

Greenland—*Dog-teams, whaling, Eskimos, etc.*—VICTOR SHAW, Loring, Alaska.

Canada, Part 1 *New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island*—FRED L. BOWDEN, 104 Fairview Ave., Binghamton, N. Y. **2** ★*Southeastern Quebec.*—WILLIAM MACMILLAN, 24 Plessis St., Quebec, Canada. **3** ★*Height of Land Region, Northern Ontario and Northern Quebec, Southeastern Ungova and Keewatin.*—S. E. SANGSTER, care *Adventure.* **4** ★*Ottawa Valley and Southeastern Ontario.*—HARRY M. MOORE, *The Courier Advocate,* Trenton, Ont., Canada. **5** ★*Georgian Bay and Southern Ontario, National Parks.*—A. D. L. ROBINSON, 269 Victoria Rd., Walkerville, Ont., Canada. **6** *Hunters Island and English River District.*—T. F. PHILLIPS, Dept. of Science, Duluth Central High School, Duluth, Minn. **7** *Lake of Woods Region.*—R. P. LINCOLN, care of U. FRILUND, 4943 Dupont Ave., So. Minneapolis, Minn. **8** ★*Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta.*—C. PLOWDEN, Plowden Bay, Howe Sound, B. C. **9** *Northw. Ter. and Arctic, Ellesmere Land and half-explored islands west, Baffinland, Melville and North Devon Islands, North Greenland.*—PATRICK LEE, 11 Franklin Pl., Great Neck, Long Is., N. Y. **10** ★*Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Mackenzie, Northern Keewatin, Hudson Bay Mineral Belt.*—LIONEL H. G. MOORE, Flin Flon, Manitoba, Canada.

Alaska—THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, Yosemite, Calif.

Western U. S., Part 1 *Pacific Coast States*—FRANK WINCH, 405 N. Spalding Ave., Los Angeles, Calif. **2** *Utah and Arizona.*—GORDON GORDON, P. O. Box 2582, Tucson, Ariz. **3** *New Mexico (Indians etc.)*—H. F. ROBINSON, 1211 W. Roma Ave., Albuquerque, N. M. **4** *Wyoming and Colorado.*—Homesteading, etc. E. P. WELLS, Sisters, Oregon. **5** *Nevada, Montana, and Northern Rockies.*—FRED W. EGELSTON, Elks' Home, Elko, Nev. **6** *Idaho and environs.*—R. T. NEWMAN, 701 N. Main St., Paris, Ill. **7** *Texas, Oklahoma.*—J. W. WHITEAKER, 2903 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex.

Middle Western U. S., Part 1 *Dakotas, Neb., Ia., Kan.*—JOSEPH MILLS HANSON, care of *Adventure.* **2** *Upper Peninsula of Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota and border waters; touring, fishing.*—R. P. LINCOLN, care of U. FRILUND, 4943 Dupont Ave., So. Minneapolis, Minn. **3** *Missouri, Arkansas, Missouri River up to Sioux City, Ozarks, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Mississippi and Lake Michigan.*—JOHN B. THOMPSON, care *Adventure.* **4** *Ohio River and Tributaries and Mississippi River.*—GEO. A. ZERR, Vine and Hill Sts., Crafton, P. O., Ingram, Pa. **5** *Lower Mississippi from St. Louis down, Louisiana swamps, St. Francis River, Arkansas Bottom.*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif. **6** *Great Lakes (all information).*—H. C. GARDNER, care of *Adventure.*

Eastern U. S., Part 1 *Eastern Maine. All Territory east of Penobscot River.*—H. B. STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Me. **2** *Western Maine. All Territory west of Penobscot River.*—DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 70 Main St., Bangor Me. **3** *Vt., N. H., Conn., R. I., Mass.*—HOWARD R. VOIGHT, 29 Baldwin St., Aimes Pt., West Haven, Conn. **4** *Adirondacks, New York,* RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif. **5** *New Jersey.*—F. H. BENT, 184 Fair Haven Rd., Fair Haven, N. J. **6** *West Va., Md., District of Columbia.*—ROBERT HOLTON BULL, 842 Spring Ave., South Hills, Charleston, W. Va. **7** *Ala., Tenn., Miss., N. C., S. C., Fla., Ga.*—HAPSBURG LIEBE, care *Adventure.* **8** *The Great Smokies and Appalachian Mountains South of Virginia.*—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

In the Next Issue

TWO BIG NOVELETTES

SPY MASTER

By Ared White

TRING LUN'S TRAP

By Capt. Frederick Moore

Also—Many Short Stories of Daring Men in Dangerous Places Up and Down the Earth.

The September 1st Issue of **Adventure** 15c Is Out August 15th

KEEP "NORMAL" WITH TASTY-LAX

Keep vigorously, radiantly healthy with Blackstone's Tasty-lax. You'll like its deliciously better Holland chocolate taste and its gentle, yet thorough effectiveness. A joy to take—acts NATURALLY—keeps you "normal"—safely. A better laxative, and MORE FOR YOUR MONEY—24 large squares for 25c instead of the usual 18. If your dealer does not carry Tasty-lax, mail 25c to

Blackstone Products Co., Dept. A, 443 Fourth Ave., New York

HAY FEVER or **ASTHMA** TREATMENT on TRIAL. If satisfied, send $1; if not, it's FREE. Write for it today. State which.

W. K. STERLINE, 610 Ohio Ave., SIDNEY, OHIO

LET OTHERS SELL FOR YOU

Wonderful opportunity to start your own business preparing Cheese Chips at home and distributing through dealers. No house-to-house canvassing. Item builds repeat business and pays big profits. Less than $10.00 investment in materials is all required. We show you how to build up a good, steady business. Write

FLUFF-O, Dept. 74-H, St. Louis, Mo.

BE AN AUTO EXPERT Learn AT HOME TO EARN BIG MONEY

Tired of layoffs and low pay? Send for FREE Auto Book of Big Payopportunities in the World's Biggest Business, and facts about practical "Job Way" Training at home in your spare time for a Good Job with a real future. Learn how to make money quick. No previous experience or special education needed. Free Employment Service and Money-Back Agreement. Write TODAY To

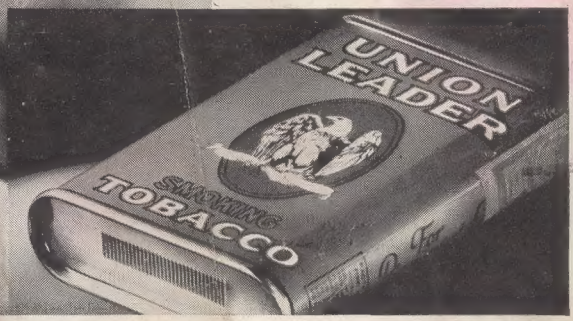
MOTOR INSTITUTE OF AMERICA
2140 Lawrence Ave., Dept. H-20, Chicago, Ill.

SEND FOR FREE AUTO BOOK

"And only a dime? that's Something"

SURE, I used to go for all those expensive pipe mixtures—thought they *had* to be better because they cost more! Then I tried Union Leader and discovered it's the *tobacco,* not the price tag, that counts. You can't buy more pipe contentment at any price than you get in this fine, *old*, mellow Kentucky Burley. So, my motto is: when you can buy the best for a dime, why part with more? (It's great in cigarettes, too.)

© P. Lorillard Co., Inc.

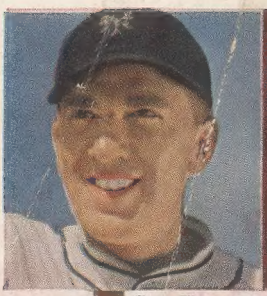


CHESTER MORRIS, Universal Pictures Star, has smoked Union Leader since 1933.

UNION LEADER

GREAT AMERICAN SMOKE

10¢



ATHLETES SAY:

"THEY DON'T GET YOUR WIND!"

CARL HUBBELL, of the N.Y. Giants, likes Camel's mildness

TRACK
GEORGE BARKER

BASEBALL
CARL HUBBELL

TENNIS
GEORGE M. LOTT, JR.

DIVING
SAM HOWARD

SWIMMING
SUSAN VILAS

GOLF
BILL MEHLHORN

KEEPING IN "CONDITION" means much to every one! Smoke Camels! Athletes say they never upset the nerves or disturb the wind.

Read what famous athletes say about Camels

The fact that athletes smoke Camels freely shows how mild Camels are. Carl Hubbell says: "Camels are so mild that no matter how many I smoke they never get my wind."

Here's Bill Mehlhorn, the veteran golfer: "From years of experience, I know that Camels will never get my wind." And George M. Lott, Jr., dynamic tennis star: "Camels never take the edge off my condition or get my wind, because they are mild."

And Sam Howard, Susan Vilas, and George Barker—all agree!

Why this mildness, approved by athletes, is important to you!

Because Camels are so mild...you can smoke all you please. They don't upset the nerves. You'll find that you never tires of their appe[illegible].

SO MILD YOU CAN SMOKE ALL YOU WANT

Camels

- Camels are made from finer, MORE EXPENSIVE TOBACCOS —Turkish and Domestic—than any other popular brand.

(*Signed*) R. J. REYNOLDS TOBACCO COMPANY, Winston-Salem, N. C.

CO[illegible]
TOB[illegible]

© 1935, R.

SCAN COURTSEY OF
EXCITER